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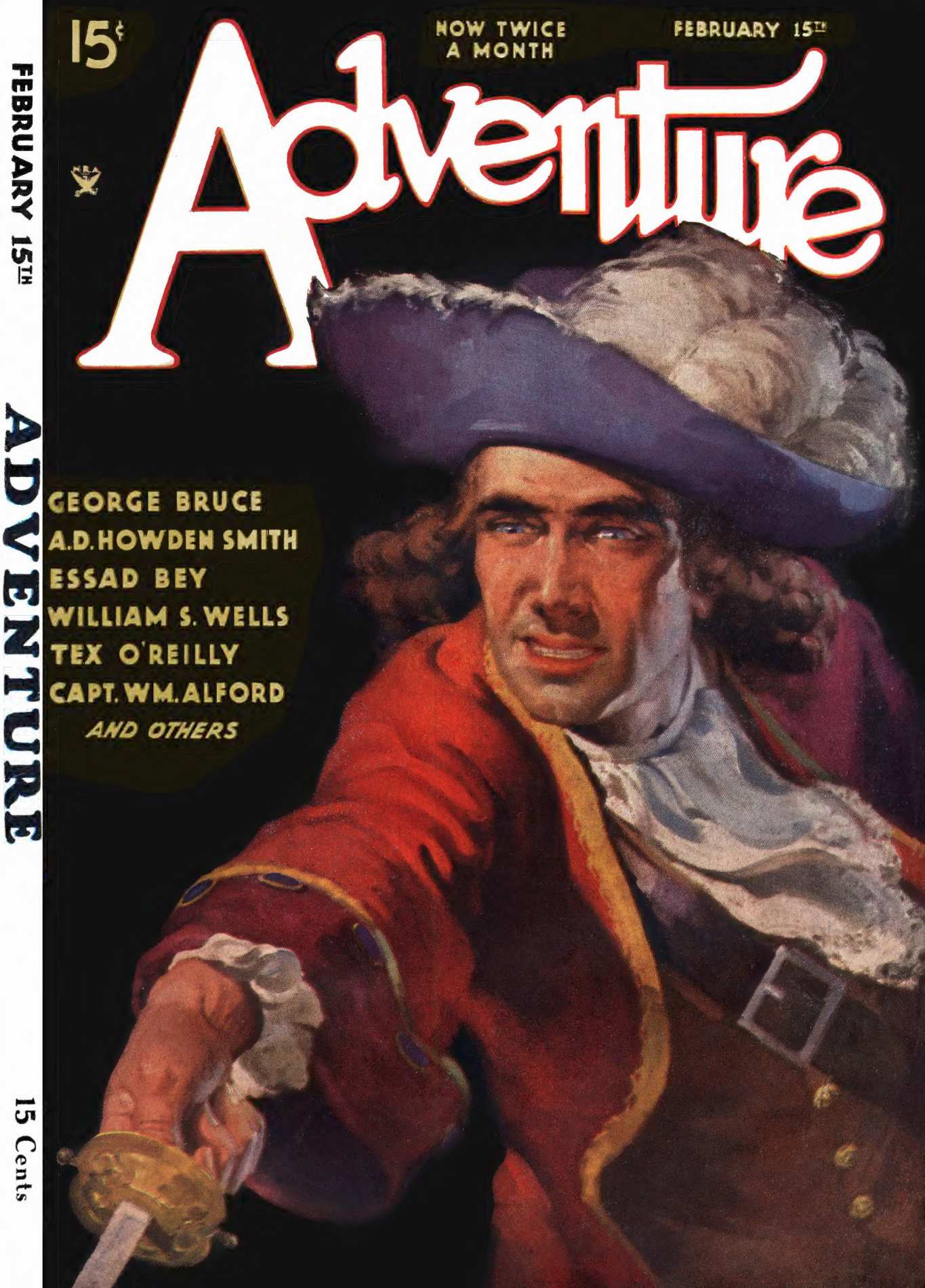

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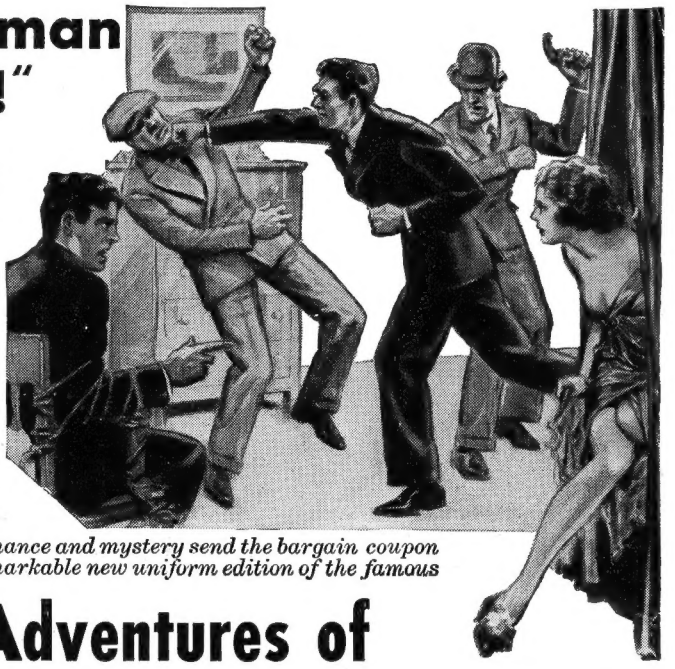

WHIRLING about with the fury of a tiger, Drummond pounced on the murderous gang, his eyes darting this way and that seeking some way to escape.

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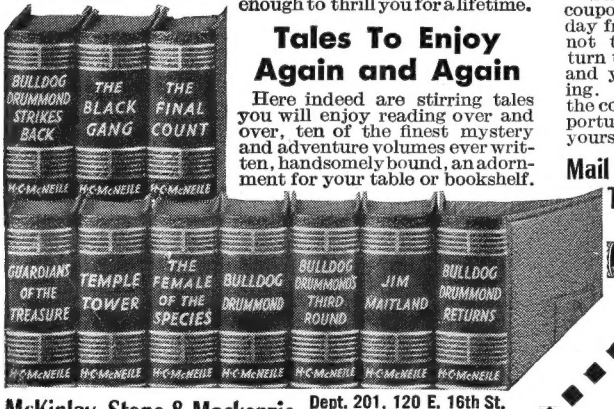

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Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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THE WOODS RUNNER

(First of Four Parts)

CHAPTER I

DOWN TO THE SEA

BY ALL the influence of ancestry I, Enoch Watson, should have been born with salt water in my blood. My people ever were rare rovers. My father, David Watson, settled in New England, but he was no husbandman and soon returned to the heaving field which stretches away around the world. Tilling the soil was not for him. The Grain and Guinea Coasts, as well as the Ivory, Slave and Tooth Shores, were household words with my people.

From the gossip of my elders I learned more about faraway places than I knew concerning the extent of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Often I listened to my grandfather as he dwelt on the weird beauty of the Gold Coast, where the yellow beach lies between the white surf and the green wall of the jungle. And there were the wild tales told about my uncle, misnamed "Berachah"—a blessing—who dropped in upon us from the bottom of the world in a huge black brig. I was quick to sense my mother's relief when he sailed away. Later we received word he had gone down with his sinister ship off the Dry Tortugas.

Naturally, it was heresy for a New England coast-dweller to disavow a hunger for blue water. This especially so as the French bid fair to confine our settlements to the narrow strip between the ocean and the Alleghanies. My people took it for granted that I was lusting to follow the billowy road. Whereas, my mind was busy with the mysteries of the enormous empire, stretching for unknown distances until it found the Pacific.

But beyond and above this avid curiosity, which caused me to stand with my back to the ocean, there ever was my deadly fear of the fickle deep. It was sacrilege to admit as much; and even as a small child I ever was playing a part. In head and heart I loathed it. It was a nameless dread I never could explain. Perhaps it was a mental legacy, handed down to me by some secretly worried Watson woman. I do not know. But

By HUGH PENDEXTER

even during calm weather, in the amiable blue expanse stretching from East Point to nowhere I beheld only a cunningly baited trap.

I was ten years old when my father was lost at sea. Aversion became poignant horror. Within a year my mother died, too. But to her last days she took it for granted I would rise to the command of a ship. I went to live with an uncle, whose large family of boys and girls talked of naught but Africa and the fabulous eastern countries. None of my cousins suspected that the orphan was ever looking inland, and was a consummate liar in pretending an avid interest in something he loathed. I saw my older cousins, hull down over the horizon, answering the ancient call.

I was too cunning to reveal my all absorbing love for the land. When the yellow bloom was covering miles of the rocky coast around Marblehead, Lynn and Salem, I would get by my lone and dream of freshly turned furrows, of cattle and horses, and bulging barns. I had a knack of gentling horses beyond the like of any of my acquaintance.

I did make several visits to the District of Maine in a lumber schooner and had some rare adventures inland in matching my wits with the ferocious Abnaki. Among the people in the little fort at Falmouth and also at North Yarmouth I was credited with much courage, as I partook of several forays against the red torments and was credited with three savages. Nor was I afraid of this venturing. I found it easy to absorb woods craft, so much so that the North Yarmouth men believed I had had much experience in forest-running.

Then, one day, a fair cousin gave me a rare start by telling the family:

"Enoch has the blue water look in his eyes. Soon he will be leaving us."

I sensed the great moment was all but upon me. I was a man grown and very

strong. I had no fear of the red men, but ever advocated the settlers should hunt them, rather than to fort themselves and await an attack. I knew I must confess my weakness, and shame my people, or place it beyond all chance of discovery.

I had heard much of the Virginia Plantations, as many blackamoors were sold there. I decided I must go where the land was rich and plentiful, and become a tiller of the soil. Norfolk was a port of call for ships in the West Indies trade. My plan was full born in a moment. I would sign on the *Northern Queen*, my uncle's boat, and leave it at Norfolk and take up land in the back country.

Thus it resulted that when the *Queen* sailed I was aboard, waving farewells until the horizon humped up and washed the homeland from view. I was quite shipwise, from playing along the waterfront and, against my will, making short trips to the fisheries and to Falmouth. I was quick and fairly intelligent, and I gave my best. None aboard who did not credit me with being an eager sailorman. But while my outward bearing was composed, I ever was wondering what the sea was plotting.

THEN the trap was sprung, much as I often had dreamed it would happen. It was a black night, and the *Queen* had passed the mouth of the Delaware and was racing along off the coast of Virginia, when the gale-demons assailed us in all earnest. A mast went overboard. Aroused from uneasy sleep I gained the deck. The night was black velvet. There came a sickening plunge. Even above the howling of the gale I heard the ominous crack of another of our sticks. Then, my uncle's great voice was crying:

"Cut away the mast!"

But the stick was over the side before an ax could touch it, and we were awash, and I was being sucked down till my lungs were fair to bursting. When I came to the surface I was nearly drowned by the sheets of water ripped by the tempest from the racing seas and spanked down to smother me. My mind and the world were crazy nightmares. When my feet felt sand and long grass I fancied I was at the bottom of the ocean. Then the combers had me again, tossing me about as a cat plays with a mouse. The next time that I was hurled ashore I had sense enough to scramble onward on all fours most frantically. Again I was overtaken, but this time I wrenched clear of the thing at my heels.

A fisherman from the Peninsula of Accomac found me in the morning in the lee of a skeletal wreck. I stared blankly at it, and made out three letters of its name: *Ave*— My rescuer informed me I was cast up on Assateague Island. He, too, had spent the night there, but on the lee shore. He accepted me as an unfortunate deep-water man, anxious to reach Norfolk and secure a berth. He conveyed me there along with a big catch of crabs in his roomy sailboat. I had not two-pence in my pocket. Not until I was ashore did I fully realize my forlorn appearance; forlorn even for the streets of a seaport town. My torn and stained shirt and knee breeches constituted my wardrobe.

I wandered aimlessly about the town, my mind in a daze. New England pride kept me from begging food. The weather was mild and I could sleep outdoors, but I could think of no means by which I might keep the life in my body. As I was considering my miserable plight I came upon a red-headed man, of about my own age, whose thin face held my attention because of its deep seated melancholy. The fellow was dressed most humbly. I would have passed him, had he not remarked:

"You look as bad as I do."

I explained my plight. After I replied to several searching questions he said: "You must get work and earn your keep. Don't let them pick you up as

vagrant and sell you into service until you can work out the magistrate's charges and other fees. That's the same as saying you'll never be free until you run away into the Injun country. Don't sign, or make your mark on any writing, and become a slave like poor Joe Cantil did."

"A white slave?" I incredulously exclaimed.

"They call it sold into service," was the bitter reply. "I'm working out my passage money from England. After two years of mortal hard labor I'm owing my master more than I did when I was sold to him."

"I thank you for your caution, but no one would hire such a miserable looking creature as I."

"We're used to most everything in this port. Try the *Walter Raleigh*. An inn. They use lots of help. You should get victuals and a poor bed until you can do better. I'm often there, as my master likes the company." He paused and glanced at the sun; then went on: "In another hour he'll awake from last night's turtle-feast and rumbullion. He'll be fair savage. He lost a goodish bit of gold yesterday at quarter-racing. Once his Barbados liquor wears off he'll be master quick with his whip. Now, you can ship on a craft of some sort, though it be a bloody pirate, and your troubles will be over. If I knew aught about ships I'd sign with the devil."

I thanked him and hastened to the tavern. I was much embarrassed when I found myself at the open door of the cook-room. A huge Guinea negro spied me, and shouted something I did not understand. But the pantomime with a huge knife was an eloquent warning for me to depart. I called out to a white man, who seemed to be a general overseer of the cooking force, saying:

"My ship went down. I want work."

"You want food without paying for it, my hearty," returned the man. "Your port is nowhere, your ballast is gall."

I desperately persisted:

"I'm from New England, and the only survivor of all who shipped on the *Northern Queen,* West Indies bound. She foundered in the big gale off Assateague Island."

The fellow took time to scrutinize me more shrewdly. Then he was surlily mumbling:

"Aye, you have the damned Yankee, psalm-singing look. I'll try you for a day, but no food till you've earned it."

THEN began what virtually was slavery for me. Of food and drink there was plenty. In truth, no man in the colonies fared better as to living than Enoch Watson. Waffles and catfish, venison and turkey, and the most savory of the seafoods. Had I been so inclined I might comfortably have become a drunkard in a brief space of time. But my head was hardened by our northern cider, and I had but small appetite for Madeira, Canary, Malaga and Fayal wines. In that autumn of 1740 those beverages were more plentiful in the Colonies than in England. As for brandies and Hollands, the daily consumption of such could scarce be believed. I was found to be satisfactory and had a bed high up under the eaves.

From kitchen rat and general chore-boy I developed into a waiter. I was supplied with more suitable clothing, cast-offs. One day I concocted a brand of flip which found immense and immediate favor. Among those who approved of it was poor Joe Cantil's master, Ransel Dee. He kept me busy overtime, filling the big pewter mug two-thirds full of strong beer, sweetened with molasses and flavored with a gill of Barbadoes rum. After ginger, nutmegs and grated lemon peel were added, I stirred the concoction with a red hot poker, whereat it would bubble and foam most alluringly. It tasted very bitter.

By degrees I improved my apparel

until I presented an almost genteel appearance. Before I realized it I was rather a high factotum, with general oversight of all the servants. Needless to say I had sent an account of the wreck to my kinsman by a Boston-bound snow at the earliest opportunity. In this epistle I was vague concerning my future plans. When not in the tap-room I was roaming the town and the outlying country. Once a month I balanced the inn's account in the nook under the back stairs.

The gossip ever was about tobacco and quarter-races. "I gave a hundred pounds of prime orinoco for that." "I gave two hogsheads for this." And so on without end, wherever planters met to eat and drink.

BUT one day a new note crept into the gossip. Three men had been killed and scalped near Borden's Grant on the James River beyond the Blue Ridge. The French were accused and roundly cursed. In the midst of sport and threatened by war the gentry gossiped, gambled and raced horses, and Dee drank more deeply. His plantation was some six miles distant, and his poor wife found it necessary to send two stout Guinea slaves to bring him home after his bouts.

On rare occasion I secured a few hours of liberty, which I improved by getting away from the tavern and the town. Sometimes Joe Cantil would emerge from cover and join me and would say:

"Master's making Virginia fences again." Whereat we both would rejoice; for it meant Dee was walking zig-zag, even as the fences were builded, and would remain in town for the night.

On such occasions Cantil almost was happy. We took long walks, and he ever was hungry to talk. Occasionally he frightened me by insisting that I take into my keeping a gold piece, or a handful of silver. He ever was frank to confess he had pilfered the money from his sleeping master. I concealed such money in a cubbyhole of my garret chamber.

Another discovery made by me was Cantil's uncanny gift for trading. I had the New England knack, but he was much my superior. One market-day he started with a knife with a broken point and ended with a fine gun. But on quarter-racing days, when high spirited horses would get out of control it was I who excelled, and thereby fattened my purse. I was offered money for my secret, but I had nothing to sell. I simply knew that could I get to a horse, which several men were having difficulty to keep from bolting, I needed only to whisper and murmur and place a hand on the brute's neck to have him follow me docilely enough.

After obtaining the gun Cantil confessed he soon would be running away. I sought to discourage him; for so long as white men invited death by climbing the Blue Ridge there were but a few havens for such as he. He would be hunted as relentlessly as an escaped slave. He might hold his freedom, could he gain and penetrate the Great Dismal Swamp, said to cover nearly two thousand square miles.

Nor do I believe the search for him would have been as hard pressed as if another had been his master. For Dee's old associates were turning against him because of his neglect of his wife.

One day, when news of fresh disagreements between England and France was brought across the water, Cantil abruptly told me:

"Neither France, nor Canada own this unexplored Ohio country."

"Of course not," I agreed. "But the winner of the next war will own it."

"Nor does Virginia, or any other colony own it," he stoutly continued.

I laughed at such logic. Later I remembered his talk and was puzzled. Taking the colonies, one by one, I could find none which was vested with ownership of the vast lands extending from the

Blue Ridge to the end of the unexplored west. There even crept into my mind, what must have been in Cantil's. And at such times I would wonder if the red savages, by some chance, did not hold first claim to that part of the continent as yet unoccupied by white men.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW LODGER

CANTIL was the one man I ever knew who, from birth apparently, never had had a chance. He told me of his drab life in detail. Only once, he informed me in his colorless, hopeless voice, had he ventured to ask by how much his debt had been reduced by his service. His answer was a blow from the butt end of a whip, which rendered him unconscious. Then Dee became suspicious that the man would run away, and, to my great delight, he hired him out to the keeper of the tavern.

That first night together we talked late into the morning hours. His story of his hardships on the Dee estate revealed an inexplicable sense of loyalty to Mrs. Dee. Looking back down the years I find I misname it. There was logic in his loyalty to the woman so seldom seen in town. She was ill-treated, not with blows but by studied neglect. She was in Cantil's class as a recipient of abuse. That first night in the top of the inn he whispered to me, among other things:

"I'm a master trader. If I can git my guts of courage back I'll make for the mountains and out-dicker the Injuns. That is, I would if wa'n't for that poor woman."

"Sympathy for her will hold you here," I prophesied. "Fear and pride are my gaolers. I am afraid of the sea. But I'd rather die than to have my northern kinsfolk know that fact."

"Something would hold me down here, even if I was free of my master," whispered Cantil through the ebony darkness. "It's a woman, Nancy Jess."

"I never heard of her."

As if to get away from the confession he abruptly boasted:

"Set me on the top of the Blue Ridge, or beyond, with some trade-goods, and I'll trade with the Injuns like you never see."

"An outlander! You can't know anything about our Indians. All the tribes are working for France. Madame de Pompadour will beggar Louis the Fifteenth and all France before she gets through."

"So!" he softly exploded. He breathed heavily as if excited. Then he was tremulously whispering: "If you tell, it's death for me under the whip. I stole—some knicknacks from the big house. The blacks were blamed and soundly beaten. Damn 'em! Many the slash of a whip I owe them. I was sent up in the hills to find stray cattle, when it was as good as death to go there. I'd seen red smokes, and I took my loot along and found Injuns. They was feasting on our stock. They was ugly at first. I dodged a blow from a war-club and lost my hat. Then they were patting their lips and pawing my red hair. I showed my trinkets and talked with my hands. I traded the loot for a fine gun, a good bow and a bundle of arrers. I'm going over the mountains. You hear me say it. I'm going over the mountains, and I'll never be brought back alive."

"You'll risk all that just because a few Indians didn't happen to kill you?"

"I'd go, anyway. The Injuns told me something, talking in signs. About a white squaw, who has red hair like mine. I feel in my bones she must be Nancy Jess, who was carried off, years ago, after all her people were killed."

"You will be overhauled before you can reach the Blue Ridge," I warned.

"Bah! Try to trail a weasel! I'll steal a hundred pounds tonight. We can be

out of reach by daybreak. We'll wade in water to throw off the dogs."

I savagely warned him, "As true as you're Joe Cantil I'll send you to the gibbet if you steal so much as two-pence. What good would money do you in the wilds?"

"There's Borden's Grant, beyond the ridge," he sullenly replied. "Money will talk there as it does here."

To appear more companionable I said: "Bide your time. I'll go with you some time, perhaps."

Fearing the sea, I should have been quite content with my lot by this time. I kept the tavern books and was sent out in various capacities. I was decently dressed. The blacks now stepped smartly when I spoke to them. The big Guinea, who had threatened me with a knife when I came to beg victuals at the cook-room, assumed I would cause him mischief. With the intelligence of a small boy he must have brooded over this imaginary vengeance on my part. For he broke and ran one night and beat the dogs in a race to the back-country.

Where my excursions had been limited to the town, now I was being sent outside in the capacity of steward for those who would travel about in their merry-making. I acted as steward for a party of wild blades going up the James to Charles City Shire in a roomy barge. I feasted my eyes on Lower Brandon and its beautiful grounds on the left bank. It was on this pleasure trip that the big Guinea bolted in the night, presumably to hide beyond the Blue Ridge. On another occasion I was sent with pipes of wine to Westover in the same shire, the princely home of the distinguished Byrd family.

It was on my return from the latter trip that I found an addition to the inn's company, who interested me hugely. His name was "Tug" and the servants prefixed it with "Black." This because of his midnight hair and beard. He was quickly set down as a "red seaman," one who might have sailed with Teach. Such swash buckling fellows were not uncommon along the Virginia coast, as they often came ashore to scatter their bloody profits on drink and women.

TUG, from choice, took a room up under the roof, and scarcely better than my own poor quarters, although larger and with the window giving on the front of the tavern. It fell to me to attend on his wants and to see he did not run into debt to mine host. He paid on the nail, however, and without being reminded. I was quick to notice that his money represented the coinage of many countries. It was the devil's own job to make a correct reckoning.

He always wore in his faded sash a curious knife with a red scabbard. This blade was long and wavy and was made to inflict mortal mischief. At first he was an object of conjecture and suspicion. As the days passed he became an accepted feature. I was thrown in contact with him more than was anyone else in the inn. But there were times when he would not see even me, but would bellow for me to leave the tray and the rum outside his door. When he emerged from that mood he would question me shrewdly as to what vessels had arrived.

On other occasions he would seek the company of the tap-room and would be free-handed in standing treat. His talk was largely about wrecks. He would listen with the keenest interest, whether the wreck mentioned be off the Capes, in Delaware Bay, or even along the Jersey sand-dunes. Cantil was fair fascinated by the fellow, and was keen to take my place in the weary climbing of the stairs. On his first venture, however, Tug foully and quickly ordered him to be gone. One day he remarked to me:

"Enoch-my-lad"—he ever ran the words together as if they formed my given and family name—"you look like one who has been denied shore-leave."

"I would like to be doing something worthwhile."

"Aye?"

He busily was polishing the wavy knife. He had trimmed his coarse black hair and beard. There was a small bag of money on the table. When I found him thus I knew he was about to seek the companionship of the tap-room; where he would drink prodigious quantities of raw rum without seemingly being affected thereby. Then came the invariable question:

"What new craft may be alongside today, Enoch-my-lad?"

"A snow from the south and Boston bound."

He wrinkled his black muzzle, and damned the "liver and lights of all psalm-singing, codfish-eating Yankees."

I went on:

"For aught I know the crew may be as you say. But if looks mean anything, then the three passengers set ashore along with the turtle-catch will cut a throat for a six-pence."

His eyes dilated, showing much white. Then, he was mumbling:

"Aye? Say ye so, Enoch-my-lad?"

I qualified my indictment by adding:

"Two of the men look like gallows-birds. But the third man is good-natured enough, I'll vow."

"So that's your reckoning, Enoch-my-lad?" he croaked. "Good-natur' and heartsome laughter. And he laughs much, you say."

"He does. And a merrier, bigger face I never saw. All who hear him, laugh."

"Ha! A merry face!" To my amazement Tug forthwith burst into a volley of whispered profanity. It chilled my blood, that tense monotone of blasphemy. He mouthed it as softly as one might pray. As I turned to go he grabbed me by the wrist and pleaded:

"Belay, Enoch-my-lad. Hold to your course to please old Tug. It's old Moon Face that you have below. Hearty and merry-like? Aye! Aye! He ever was that. And there be snakes on Panama whose bite is instant death. Yet they be innercent as wooly lambs, alongside of Moon Face."

"You mean he is a rascal?" I was incredulous, for the new guest's hilarious laughter seemed to be very genuine.

"The devil's a pure-hearted gentleman when standing along side of him. 'Twas a long time ago we two fell out. I quit the old *Avenger* at Havana, and I hoped she would sink and take him along to Davy Jones' locker. I ran across the bow of an old shipmate in Liverpool, who told me Moon Face swam through the sharks that night at Havana when he found I'd gone ashore. Which speaks high for his spirit, Enoch-my-lad. For Havana sharks be busybodies and can be troublesome. Since making this port I've tried to keep clear of Moon Face an' l'arn where the old *Avenger* went down. Her crew must 'a' gone straight to Davy Jones' locker. For never in any port could I ever l'arn that any of her stout, roaring lads was afloat."

I was seeing it all again, the heaving seas the morning after our ship went down, the lush grass on Assateague and the ribs of the broken-up wreck. I heard myself exclaiming:

"Good land! There's an old hulk on Assateague. There's some letters, left of her name. *Ave—*"

He glared at me wildly; then he half-closed his eyes, and became cunning. With a fine attempt at disinterest he hoarsely murmured:

"So she went ashore *there*, Enoch-my-lad. It's my natur' to want to know what happens to the stout ships I've sailed in; ships what was father an' fambly to me. It's too faraway for a old hulk like me to drift."

"You would be wasting your time," I frankly told him. "The wreck has been knocked to pieces until only her ribs show. The timbers have been used for horseshelters for the animals wintered there. If there was any loot in the hulk,

the fisher folk from the Main have found it long since." With a flare of heat I added, "She must have been a bloody pirate!"

He wagged his head and frankly agreed:

"A most cruel and bloody pirate as ever you see. That's why old Tug left her, my lad. In a small boat. With Moon Face swimming through the sharks, a cruel knife atween his teeth. Trying to overhaul me, Enoch-my-lad. Naught left of the wreck but her ribs? Aye, aye. Well, she had her days. But you're a heartsome lad. You'll be knowing where there's a stout coil of rope. Enough to reach from this porthole to the ground."

"There's rope a-plenty around the tavern, and some is easily gotten," I confessed.

He thrust his bearded face close to mine, his dark eyes were liquid blackness as he whispered:

"Why, then! Hark ye to this. There's a fat bag of clinking pieces waiting for you, Enoch-my-son. Fetch me the rope while Moon Face and his roaring mates be busy with their rum. It's best I haul off and make another port, rather then to stay here at mooring and bloody up this honest tavern. When I go I'll be leaving the bag of stout coins right here for you to find."

"Keep your money," I shortly told him. "It's foul come by, I'll warrant. But I'll fetch the rope and wish you good luck so long as you live as you should."

"I shall live only to do good deeds, my pure-hearted boy. I may go to that Blue Ridge country and plant crops and live quietly."

I was glad to be clear of the old villain. I found a coil of rope hung on a peg near my garret room, and deposited it outside Tug's door. I heard him dragging it inside as I was making down the narrow stairs.

RANSEL DEE was dismounting and cursing the black groom who came to lead the horse to a hitch-rail. I followed him into the tap-room and beheld Moon Face and his companions huddled over a small jug of brandy, which they were drinking as though it were water. The leader's face was huge and round, and beyond all proportions of any visage I ever had seen. Outside, the shadows on the green were lengthening. Cantil, under a pretense of seeking instruction, hurried to me and murmured:

"Dee's wife's dying. Got it from one of the blacks. He's left her to come here and git drunken. I'm striking for the mountains tonight."

Dee lurched against me, and finding Cantil in his path he gave him a buffet on the head that sent him staggering. Then he was at a table and cursing a waiter for not hastening away to fill an order which he had forgotten to give. Cantil's face was a mask of frozen hate as he murmured:

"Tonight. I'm making for the Ridge."

I was fair sick of my environment. Land and crops, pigs, cows and horses, were ever in my mind. I knew there must be plenty of land where the red savages would not be too much of a menace. A border man had left behind in settlement of his bill a gun which was a vast improvement over any I had seen. It was on the topmost floor, undesired by anyone except myself. I believe I had earned it over and above my keep. I snapped my fingers and called Cantil back to me and I murmured:

"Mayhap I'll be riding with you."

Then did Fate seem willing to play my cards for me. For the proprietor of the tavern bustled into the room and ordered me to be off early in the morning, riding to Charles City in the shire of that name, with a message for the proprietor of the Boswell Arms and the payment of some money. I bowed and moved among our guests to see that all were served to

their liking. The deep, hearty laughter of Moon Face boomed through the long, low room and caused many of our patrons to smile in sympathy. As I was passing the pirate's table he detained me with a little gesture, and remarked:

"A pleasant anchorage, this, young sir. We should be well housened and bedded here."

"None better in Norfolk, which means in all the colony," I replied. "You are well served?"

"The devil's fiddler couldn't be better served, young sir. We lay to swing our hammocks here, if a hard-faring sailor man can pay the shot. What would mean high up under the roof, I suppose."

"There are accommodations in the garret for those who will climb to save the purse."

"When does the tide ebb?" asked another of the precious trio, whose thin sharp face reminded me of a rat.

"Close to midnight," I told him.

"And poor mortal man often slips his hawser when the tide is going out," solemnly mused Moon Face.

There was some hidden joke in his words, for his companions half closed their eyes and laughed silently. I was quick to be away about my business. I found Cantil in the cook-room, greedily bolting broken victuals. Under my breath I told him:

"Tell Tug that his friends know he is here."

He was off and I rejoined the company with an oversight of the service. Moon Face and his companions were worrying a big platter of venison, much like dogs. I passed through to the front of the house and stood by one of the tall windows and glanced up, and was glad to behold the end of a rope dangling down along side of the house. Then one of our habitual loungers came running across the green and lustily yelled:

"Quick, Mister Landlord! Top floor lodger's sliding down a rope!"

His voice carried to the eating room. I heard a table and crockery crash to the floor. Then Moon Face and his companions were erupting and were bearing down on me. I stepped aside from the window and they struck me squarely and hurled me through the open door. Lying flat on my back, quite bereft of wind, I stared up along the rope and saw the figure of a man descending. He was on a level with the second floor when I first glimpsed him.

One of the savage trio fired a pistol. Tug's weapon roared back an answer. One of Moon Face's companions howled and fell. Tug then completed the rest of his descent with great celerity. Moon Face rushed on him, with knife drawn, as his feet hit the ground. From my prone position I stretched forth a leg and tripped Moon Face flat on his face. With the elasticity of a tree-cat Tug leaped astride Ransel Dee's quarter-racing mare and was streaking away through the town.

CHAPTER III

THE EXODUS

THE hullabaloo was tremendous. Guests and servants poured forth from the inn to gape at the dead pirate and to listen to the fearsome threats of Moon Face. Ransel Dee was one of the last to appear, and he staggered as he walked. His blasphemy was terrible to hear once he learned that his racing mare had been stolen. As he paused for breath he happened to glimpse Cantil. He rushed at him, fiercely demanding:

"Why didn't ye protect my property, ye scut?"

"'Twas all done afore one could think, sir. And being shifted here to work, sir, I had my mind on my new duties."

"I'll duty ye!" cried Dee. And with that he smashed his fist heavily into the face of his bond-man, bringing blood. Those who once were his boon compan-

ions, turned away in disgust. Then someone was distracting the company's attention by loudly proclaiming:

"Here comes an express! He rides hard enough to be fetching big news!"

"God give the savages aren't this side of the Ridge!" exclaimed a quavering voice.

As the racing figure came nearer we discovered the rider to be a colored man. Dee swayed unsteadily, forgot Cantil who was crawling to his feet, and winked his bleared eyes to clear his vision. Then, with a round oath, he was exclaiming:

"One of my blacks! The accursed fool has well near spoiled the horse!"

With that he rushed forward to meet the rider. It was sickening, the brutality of the man. The slave slipped to the ground and groveled. He yelped something in a tongue I did not understand, even as the whip which Dee always wore hooked to his belt was being raised. But Cantil was quick to catch the jumbled words, and was hoarsely crying:

"Guinea man says the poor Missus Dee is dead!"

Dee stared stupidly at the black, and then hooked the riding-whip on his belt. Men crowded around him, offering sympathy and proffering mounts for him to use in returning to his plantation. He astounded and horrified all by hoarsely saying:

"I'll not spend the night in that house. I can't do any good. No one can help the dead. I'll go back in the morning."

None spoke, as with uneven steps, he re-entered the inn. Cantil's eyes were lurid in the light feeding through the windows. He mumbled, "Of all God's sorry creatures, he is the most heartless. If ever I had a doubt it's gone now. Let's go to one side."

I followed him out of hearing of the whispering group. Speaking rapidly, he informed me, "I'm leaving tonight for the Blue Ridge and the Injun country." Through the window I could see Dee drinking rum and having the table all to himself. My mind shifted from the scene I had just witnessed. Land! Love of land and fat crops and domestic animals! The cumulative effect of all the restrained I had practiced since coming to the inn was slippng away. At first I did not reveal my half-formed purpose. I said:

"I must ride to Charles City, starting before daybreak. I'll go with you that far."

"Good. 'Twould be better if you went all the way. One or two settlements across the ridge are holding their own against the Injuns."

"I must do my business at Charles City. But how will you run for it? You are still bound-out."

"I'll get a horse."

"I can't travel with you if you steal."

"The horse will be honest come-by."

"Satisfy me of that and I'll ride with you within a few hours."

"It's past midnight. Ride with me within the hour."

"Done! If there be no knavery about your going. That you should run away to be a free man is a crime under the law, but I'll not weigh that against you."

For the rest of the evening I attended to my duties mechanically, but none complained of any disservice that night. Our patrons were too engrossed in discussing the pirates, and roundly cursing Dee for his delay in returning home. Near midnight, with the company thinning out, Cantil came up to me as if seeking instructions. He breathed rapidly as if he had been running. His half closed eyes darted a glance at Dee, who seemed to be more sober. It was plain he knew enough to realize he was being shunned. He quit the table and went upstairs to his chamber. Cantil watched him until he passed from view. Then he murmured:

"I have a man waiting, who talks none. He will set me across to the mouth of the James. Will you go with me? I can't get a horse as you'd want me to."

"I'll meet you at the Blue Dragon in Charles City. I must pay some small accounts along the way. Go by boat. I cannot ride beside a stolen nag."

"I have picked up two guns. I'll leave one in the stable for you. It's a rare one. I traded for them. They come from the Kentucky country."

A few hours later I was saddling a nag, and by lanthorn light was admiring the weapon my friend had procured, God knows how. It was far better than my gun in the garret. The barrel was long, but not near as heavy as that of a musket. There was a bag of small bullets, a filled powder-horn, and flints.

Further observation revealed a metal plate in the butt. This pivoted on an iron pin and covered a small recess which was filled with small linen patches, heavy with grease. These could have but one use, to wrap around a ball when the latter was rammed home. The grease would lubricate the barrel and prevent it from becoming foul. To me it was a new and most effective firearm.

Cantil returned to bid me good-by. I urged him to be off and make the most of the night.

"They'll not miss you till morning," I added. "Too much excitement here about the pirates and Dee."

"I'll travel fast enough."

"He won't know whither you've gone," I encouraged.

In a hoarse whisper, and with a curious twisting of his angular features, he told me:

"Right! An' he'll never know. Just now he don't know much of nothing, except how it feels to be dead."

My heart gave a violent flop. I held up the lanthorn. His eyes were half closed and his face wore a fixed smile.

"How do you know he is dead?" I whispered. "No lights are moving on his floor."

He darted his sharp gaze about at the shadows, and then drew close and gave me a tremendous shock by confessing:

"I killed him. Knifed him while he slept. I have all his money. You shall have half."

I was overwhelmed with horror and could do naught but gape like an expiring fish. He was quick to defend himself, saying:

"I owed it to him ten times over for what he has done to me. Yet I'd have held my hand if not for that poor lady. If the preachers know what they talk about, then she's gone to a big reward. He's gone to hell."

"You'll be hunted as a murderer!" My low voice was tremulous. "The two of us will be hunted as murderers! I can't be mixed up in this. I can't ride with you."

His red head bowed slowly in the flickering light.

"I'd never thought of that. I left the knife in his hand and part of the gold. Looks like he snuffed out his own candle. But it's my risk. I can buy a hoss now. Or steal one, if I am to ride alone. I'm off. If you see me again it will be beyond the Blue Ridge."

With that he faded away in the darkness and leaving me feeling I had failed him in friendship by refusing to travel in his company. And yet I could not see how I could have done otherwise. I slept none that night and was glad to be up and on my horse, with the gift gun across the saddle, and riding for Charles City. At that early hour the silent sleeper on the second floor had not been discovered. I made no haste, for there was that, fleeing ahead of me, I did not care to overtake. It was a horrible crime, and the fugitive's fate was sealed should he be captured. The planters would never lament the death of such as Dee, but they would inexorably seek to run down and hang the murderer, if only as an example to the lowermost stratum of Virginia society.

SO I loitered and ate my breakfast ten miles from Norfolk, and I felt relieved when the first of the man-hunters came along and recognized me and informed me of the murder and asked if I had seen aught of Cantil. I replied in the negative, and they raced on. Later in the day other bands overtook and passed me, and now I was coming to reward notices posted in every little settlement and inn.

It was sundown when I did arrive at the Blue Dragon, having been three days on the journey, so slothfully had I traveled. The reward notices were ahead of me. I gave my horse to a young black and followed him to see that the animal was decently stabled. As I turned back and would have made for the inn I came to a halt before a squat structure of stone to stare at a beautiful face, pressed close to the grating of the small window. Or perhaps it was the brilliancy of the woman's red hair which first caught my attention.

"Heigho, lady fair," I greeted. "You seem to be in a poor plight."

"I am most unfortunate," she replied, and her voice as clear as that of our northern lark.

Feeling awkward enough I ventured:

"Surely, mistress, you can have done no evil."

"The law says I have. The law says I am a witch," she murmured, her voice as soothing as the slumbrous flow of the Saco across the intervales up in the District of Maine.

I was embarrassed and almost regretted having tarried. "What have you done?" I asked. For often the devil takes rare forms to deceive man.

She smiled slightly, and replied, "There is a paper on the door that tells what I'm accused of doing, or being." Then she stepped back into the darkness of her prison.

Talking with witches ever is a dangerous occupation, and I feared she had fair bewitched me; although I was surprised to find it was a pleasureable sensation. I found the official writing and had some difficulty to read it in the waning light.

> Whereas a formal complaint, brought agt. Nancy Jess for suspicion of Witchcraft by ye Atty. General's report to his Excly. in Council, was too general, and not charging her with any particular act, yet the Ct. might if it thought fitt have her examined *de novo*, and the Ct. being of ye opinion that there is great cause of suspicion, do therefore do order that ye sheriff take said Nancy Jess, also called 'Ye Bird Woman,' into safe custody until she shall give bond & security for her appearance to ye next Ct. to be examined *de novo*.

After reading this official notice I awkwardly wondered whether it be best to move on, or endeavor to say something of a comforting nature. There could be but one Bird Woman, and poor Cantil had talked much about her and had made her name, Nancy Jess, familiar to me. It was seldom that we in New England took liberties with the Law. My wavering mind was made up by the most wonderous outburst of bird songs one can imagine. At the great risk of having a spell put upon me I pressed my face against the grating, and asked:

"Had you a chance to escape, could you get clear of this place? Would you need a horse?"

Again her face was close to the grating, her eyes staring into mine; and I believed she had cast her witch's spell on me, and somehow rejoiced it was so. She was softly whispering:

"I am only a poor, unfortunate woman, who was captured when young by the Indians, who let me live because I can talk with birds and squirrels and other wild life. I can not remember when I could not do it. My poor people were killed when I was captured. I have done no harm. But they will try me by water, and when I do not sink, they may try me by fire. Get this door open!

Bring me a horse. Be I witch and I wouldn't need your help. My horse is a sorrel and is on the left, just inside the door."

My mind was made up, even while she was speaking, and I told her:

"I will do my best, Mistress Jess. Joe Cantil is making for the hills."

"Poor lad, poor lad!" she softly murmured. "Then he's run away at last!"

"I must enter the inn. I will be back."

With that I hastened to the hostelry and entered the tap-room, where the landlord gave me a gruff greeting and followed with the dour warning:

"You do ill by yourself, Watson, to face that evil creature."

I put down a bag of coins on the bar and said:

"The moneys you advanced to our young Norfolk blades at the request of the *Walter Raleigh*. The prisoner? What crime has she committed?"

He laboriously wrote a receipt for the money, and then explained:

"She is one of the devil's brood which this colony will root out with all glory to God."

I had my supper served in a corner close to the door, and I wondered just how I could help the maid. Near-by a black man was serving hot rum to a man who appeared to have had enough some time since. I would have given him only passing heed if not for his pounding on the table with a bunch of ponderous keys. I was recalling the lock on the gaol door, a huge, clumsy affair. Suddenly the man decided he preferred to stand at the bar and in abandoning the table he left the keys. I called a black and ordered some ale and asked:

"That man who sat at the next table is the high sheriff?"

The black nodded and sighed. After he passed on I reached aside and gathered up the keys, my eyes watching that no one saw my theft. Leaving my meal I passed into the sitting-room and then out into the night. The tap-room side of the inn looked out on the stable and gaol, but the windows were small and high, perhaps so no angry spouse could spy on the company while searching for an errant mate.

I entered the stable and, as I had hoped, found the blacks absent, probably eating their evening meal. I took note of a big sorrel nearest the door, and then proceeded to the gaol and tried two keys before I found the right one.

The prisoner came forward as the door swung open and, on recognizing me, murmured: "If ever I can do you a service—"

I gestured for her to be silent, and closed and locked the door, and then said:

"Your horse awaits you. Can you ride bareback, and with only a halter?"

"I can ride any horse in the world, even without a halter."

"Then be away sprightly. You may come upon Joe Cantil. Tell him you met Enoch Watson. Good faring."

She seemed to be over-slow.

"What's delaying you now?" I impatiently asked.

She was fussing with the halter of another horse. "Joe may be in need of it," she murmured.

"God help us both if we're detected in this business! You are taking the sheriff's nag!"

Her face was bewilderingly beautiful as she smiled on me. Then she was vanishing in the dusk. Despite the risk of discovery I was compelled to stand and watch the gathering darkness swallow her up. I recalled she was garbed in dressed fawn skins and that her feet were encased in tiny moccasins.

But it was high time I was back at my corner table. When I slipped inside the door of the tap-room the sheriff was still at the bar. I put the keys back on the table and returned to my own place. Then I was marveling at my audacity. A low, guttural laugh startled me. Two men had entered during my absence, but

CHAPTER IV

OVER THE RIDGE

BIRD songs aroused me, and I was surprised to find I had thrown myself down to sleep so close to the road. I led my horse farther back, where he could graze behind a thicket of laurel and other bush growth, and then found a high perch in a tree where I could glimpse the rough thoroughfare so long closed by fear to the settlers.

In my great haste I had taken no food. When aweary of my uncomfortable lookout I would descend, talk to the horse and skirmish for a hatful of wild cherries, bitter and acrid, yet better than nothing. To the west of the ridge towered high, and by midday I began to fear I was too close to the settlements.

The cherries made me extremely thirsty and slacked my thirst at the brawling James near-by; and my horse followed at my heels and also drank. When I returned to my tree and had climbed high to spy on my back trail I was both elated and alarmed by the sight of two horsemen far down the slope. I slipped to the ground and secured my horse behind a thick growth of hazel bushes and then scouted to the horse-path to spy on the newcomers.

I first identified the stout figure of Michi. My relief was tremendous. My relaxation permitted me to give a thought of poor Cantil. And I wondered if the Bird Woman had found him. And I was fleeing from the authorities who held a two-fold suspicion: that I was Cantil's second victim; that I was his accomplice in the murder of Dee.

I called to my horse and he obediently came to me and followed me to the edge of the pioneer road. The two horsemen were quite close, but had not spied me. Pinau was carrying a musket that was in excess of five feet in length and which never would be a weapon of precision. I knew it shot only eighteen bullets to the pound, although it did have bands instead of pins, a considerable improvement. Michi was armed with even a more cumbersome weapon. When I stepped from cover, Pinau, for a moment was silent; then he was greeting:

"Ten pounds, English, for your gun. Your running away leads some to believe you helped a bound-man kill a planter. You got away just in time."

Michi barely noticed me. He was intent on some interrupted discussion with the Frenchman. For, before I could reply to Pinau, he was saying, "I must maintain that the first men to visit this continent were the Carthaginians. North America is the great Atlantis, about which the ancients wrote."

"Are the law-officers traveling up this road?" I anxiously broke in.

"Herr Michi, I have the honor of being a lineal descendant of Hector of Troy," coldly announced the Frenchman.

"Are the law officers on my trail, Captain Pinau?" I repeated. "I have read much about Hector of Troy in books borrowed from the Harvard College."

"It does you proud, my young friend," gravely said Pinau.

Under ordinary conditions this intimation I might be the travel-companion of a descendant of the redoubtable Hector would have thrilled me mightily. Before I could repeat my query, Herr Michi was impatiently conceding, "To appease your sensitive pride I grant your descent. But I never will concede the Franks to be the first people in America. There is some evidence, however, that the ancient Scythians and Tartars came here soon after the Carthaginians. This was after the scattering of Noah's grandsons."

"Bah!"

"What say you, Captain Pinau?"

"I did but cough, *m'sieur*," gloomily answered the Frenchman. Then, in a derisive undertone, "Noah's grandsons!"

"I feel vastly disturbed over my situ-

"So," mumbled Michi. "Shall we take him along with us?"

Pinau twisted his wiry wisp of a mustache as if intent on plucking it out, hair by hair; then he was saying:

"We'll take him along at least until he has a chance to prove he can subdue wild horses. You came here on a horse?"

"But not mine. I can't steal it. If I go, I must go afoot."

"I will provide a horse," said Pinau.

A townsman interrupted our talk by bursting through the doorway close-by, and drunkenly shouting as he advanced to the bar, "Be I in time to see that accursed witch drown?"

The sheriff smiled blandly, pushed a small jug of Jamaica toward the newcomer, and answered, "Tomorrow will bring the test. An be she a witch—"

"Damnation! She's a thousand in one! I saw her once talking with wild birds!"

"Ha! Say you so? You shall give evidence before the court. Would you care to see the evil vixen, and make sure she is the one who talks with birds?"

"After a double-switch of this rum there's nothing I'd like better."

"Then finish your dram and come with me." Forthwith the law officer, walking unsteadily, and making a few Virginia fences, escorted the planter from the tap-room.

Pinau fixed his sharp gaze on me, and murmured, "Look carefree. Be ready to show surprise." I endeavored to screw my features into what I believed to be an expression of composure; but Michi rumbled in his beard:

"Close your eyes. You look wild as a hawk. Hist! Drink!"

I had my head thrown back, the big mug masking much of my face as the sheriff fairly exploded through the doorway, his planter acquaintance close behind him. Every eye was on the two as they advanced to the bar. The sheriff bolted a stout dram, and then, his voice unsteady, he cried:

"Damnation! She's a witch all right! She unlocked that stout gaol door without keys, and took two horses. One of 'em mine! Without keys, she locked the door after her! I summons all you men in the name of the law to turn out and help me trail her!"

"In the dark?" expostulated the planter. "Damme, if I'll be put under her black spells! Witches thrive best at night."

Pinau nudged me in the ribs, and whispered, "Your chance! You'll be provided with a horse. Ride for the ridge. Withdraw to one side and sleep after you have covered a dozen miles. Leave a broken branch in the path. We'll know you are close by."

I took my cue and loudly volunteered:

"Furnish me with a fresh mount. I'll give chase."

"One man has guts!" cried the sheriff. "Landlord, in the name of the law, furnish him a nag. Who else?"

"Take the horse nearest the door," grumbled the landlord. "Sheriff, you will be held responsible."

I lost no time in picking up my new gun and hurrying to the stable. I found the horse to be a fractious beast, but soon had him gentle enough. As I was vaulting to his back a horseman raced up the tavern and dismounted and left his horse to find shelter, or wander where he would. That he was riding post-haste betokened important news. I walked my mount to the tavern door and found it open. The newcomer was loudly proclaiming:

"Norfolk authorities want the houseman of the *Walter Raleigh* returned under heavy guard. He is suspected of having had a hand in the murder of Ransel Dee, a planter! Some believe he has been murdered by Cantil."

I knew I was through with the tavern for all time. I lifted my mount into a gallop and raced up the river road which would lead me to the Blue Ridge, to freedom—or death at the hands of the red men.

CHAPTER IV

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"Are the law officers on my trail, Captain Pinau?" I repeated. "I have read much about Hector of Troy in books borrowed from the Harvard College."

"It does you proud, my young friend," gravely said Pinau.

Under ordinary conditions this intimation I might be the travel-companion of a descendant of the redoubtable Hector would have thrilled me mightily. Before I could repeat my query, Herr Michi was impatiently conceding, "To appease your sensitive pride I grant your descent. But I never will concede the Franks to be the first people in America. There is some evidence, however, that the ancient Scythians and Tartars came here soon after the Carthaginians. This was after the scattering of Noah's grandsons."

"Bah!"

"What say you, Captain Pinau?"

"I did but cough, *m'sieur,*" gloomily answered the Frenchman. Then, in a derisive undertone, "Noah's grandsons!"

"I feel vastly disturbed over my situ-

ation. What is said about my disappearance?" I anxiously intruded.

"You are looked upon as the accomplice of the Norfolk murderer," Michi tersely informed me.

"Am I being sought by law-officers?" I anxiously asked again.

"Surely, *m'sieur*. But what could you expect? Only they look for you along the coast."

Michi waved his fat club of a hand and resumed, "I will concede that the Israelites, after the general Captivity—"

"Don't move! Don't speak!" hissed Pinau.

The three of us reined in and became silent. Then we were hearing it: a faint hum of human voices. Gesturing for us to remain where we were, Pinau slipped from the saddle and vanished in the ancient growth. After several minutes of nervous expectancy on my part, the Frenchman reappeared and signaled for us to advance.

Michi called out:

"Ask who they be!"

As we rode forward Pinau angrily warned:

"Call out like that again, Herr Michi, and our scalps may be stretched on hoops to dry. Fortunately they happen to be white men." He turned and walked through the growth, his horse following him, and soon we came to a clearing and a log cabin.

"No one lives here," complained Michi.

Pinau lifted a hand for silence, and said, "I heard voices."

Almost immediately a voice was calling:

"Come this way, if you be friends."

"Of a certainty, my friends," bawled Michi. "But if we knew where you are we could seek you the more intelligently. You should come to greet us—Heaven protect us! Heads growing on a tree!"

The illusion was quite perfect. Two heads, seemingly, were transfixed to the trunk of a huge oak. My uncle once told me that where there is but one logical explanation, that one must be correct, regardless of how improbable it might appear.

"They are in a hollow tree," I deduced.

"M'sieur Watson, you do yourself credit," said Pinau.

The illusion vanished, once we had changed our viewpoint. Two men in a hollow tree were watching us. One of the heads called out, "Thank the Lawd you be white. I'm Stephen Sewell. Who be you?"

"François Pinau, Adolph Michi, and myself, named Enoch Watson," I replied.

"Not Berachah Watson?" demanded Sewell.

"I've told you my name. 'Enoch'," I shortly replied.

"At least we can thank God for that much." It was meant for an undertone.

I wondered. Pinau was staring at me sharply and must have noticed my discomposure. For my benefit alone, Michi now in advance of us, he murmured:

"Some of your tribe, this Berachah Watson?"

"An uncle. He went down with his ship off the Dry Tortugas years ago."

Pinau rode forward and demanded:

"Whose cabin is this that seems to be abandoned?"

"Ours," said Sewell. "Mine 'n Jesse Carver's. But we ain't friends, no more."

"But if you two can live in the same hollow tree, why not in the cabin?" puzzled Michi.

"'Fraid of Injuns. Found fresh signs down the slope," Sewell explained. "If they come in the night they won't catch us cooped up."

"Why aren't you friends?" asked Pinau.

"He ain't got the pure light on religion. I'm Presbyterian, he's Episcopalian."

"He can't see the light when it's burning afore his eyes," sullenly contributed Carver.

"He won't trust me," denounced

Sewell, "so I don't trust him. We stayed awake all night, watching each other."

"I see," murmured Pinau. "Your religions must be a great consolation to you."

"If you can't agree, why keep together?" puzzled Michi.

"Property. The cabin. We can't divide it," mumbled Carver.

"Sell your cabin and divide the money," Pinau suggested. "I'll give ten pounds in louis d'ors."

"French money," suspiciously observed Carver.

"You can easily change my money into English at the rate of twenty shillings sterling," said Pinau.

"Any new war busted out atween us and France?" asked Sewell, suspiciously.

"Their Christian Majesties were at peace the last I heard," said Pinau.

"I'll sell my half," agreed Sewell.

"Mister, I'll sell my share. We two could git along if he'd admit—" began Carver.

"You two talk too much without saying anything," Pinau cut in. Forthwith he was inspecting the cabin. Satisfied, he counted out the purchase price in two portions. Then he selected a charred stick from the fireplace and drew on the outside of the door the outlines of a turtle, and beneath it an outline picture of a log house.

"What's that rinktum mean?" suspiciously asked Carver.

"It tells all red men that the owner belongs to the Turtle Clan of the Mohawks. I was adopted into the clan last year when in New York Colony." Then he was telling the quaint couple:

"You no longer have a home. I advise you to travel along with us. We're making for Borden's Grant. I'm told one can buy a thousand acres of land for fifty pounds."

This was the first I had heard of our destination.

"I know Borden," said Carver. "He fetched a hundred families from England to settle on the Grant. He located half a million acres on the James an' thereabouts."

Sewell eagerly contributed:

"A woman went there and built thirty cabins. Borden gave her a hundred acres for each one she built."

He paused for breath, and Carver caught up the theme, and added:

"Name of Polly Mulholin. Bound out to Jim Bell to pay for her passage."

"Dresses like a man," added Sewell. "That settlement has high character. Folks are mostly Presbyterians."

"Episcopalians!" hotly corrected Carver.

Pinau harshly put an end to their quarrel, warning:

"If you travel with us there must be no more disputing. Herr Michi and I will do all the arguing, about the first men to come to this country."

"They was the Phoenicians," promptly said Carver.

"Imbecile!" grunted Michi.

SALTED meat and hard bread were brought from the cabin, and the five of us dined after a fashion, as we slowly rode along a horse path, which, for a wonder, both of our new companions agreed led to Borden's Grant.

It was a beautiful country, although the Virginians had required a hundred years to reach the crest of the Ridge. Far down below, extending through the spacious valley, was the Great Warriors' Path, traversed by Cherokees and Iroquois in raiding one another's towns. Shawnees and Delawares, too, used it in carrying on their bloody intertribal wars. Now all these red forces were finding a common cause in striving to keep the white race east of the barrier.

After we had advanced several miles we came upon an aged red man reclining on the ground, his shoulders resting against a tree. I think we all believed him to be dead. Carver and Sewell,

armed with knife and ax, respectively, sounded a *whoop* and rushed upon the recumbent figure. With unexpected resilience the savage came to his feet and glided into the virgin growth.

"It's Powhatan John, a bloody old devil!" yelled Sewell.

"He worships, with human sacrifices, the One Alone Called Kiwasa!" cried Carver.

"You stalk your game too clumsily," growled Michi. "But it's better so. It would be like destroying an ancient monument."

"I would have talked with him," said Pinau, his voice betraying his displeasure. "I have a medicine against all savages if I but have a chance to show it." From his hunting shirt he produced a small metal box.

"Then it's devil's work, and I'm against it!" declared Sewell. "What's in it? I'll buy some."

"It can not be opened except in a case of life or death," solemnly explained the Frenchman. "The red men believe it contains the spotted sickness, the pox."

"God ha' marcy!" cried Sewell.

Michi impatiently urged:

"Let us be forward. The box contains nothing but snuff." He paused and lifted his head and sniffed the air. I caught it, stale smoke. Michi asked:

"Is there a settler's cabin near here?"

"The Carryway place," said Carver.

"Something besides a cabin has burned," mumbled Michi. "Lead the way."

The two men were off, and we pounded after them. In a bend in the path we saw Carver come to a halt and fling an arm across his face. We heard him cry out:

"Oh, how and why can such be?"

We passed him, but soon were reining in before the ruins of a cabin. In the smouldering debris was the body of a white man, his head cloven by an ax.

"God give him rest in Paradise!" groaned Carver. "It's old Aaron Carryway!" Then he was shaking his fist at Pinau in a burst of passion, and was exclaiming, "And you let old Powhatan John escape! He was the leader in this devil's work!"

Pinau's eyes narrowed and his lips drew back, baring his white teeth, and reminding me of a northern lynx.

"Had he wife and children?" he asked.

"He lived alone. His door never was barred. None of the tribes would bother him, except the Powhatans," said Sewell.

"Fetch the poor body out of that rubble. We'll give him a decent burial," said Pinau.

Carver ran his tongue over his dry lips and hoarsely whispered:

"If they've struck here, they've struck the settlement at Borden's Grant. Death lies ahead in the valley. I'm turning back to my hollow tree."

"I've seen enough," mumbled Sewell. "I, too, will go back."

"Pure science never turns back," grunted Michi.

CHAPTER V

BORDEN'S GRANT

BORDEN'S GRANT was a busy place. The families brought over from England were finding their first summer in the new world filled with perplexities. There was nothing in their new environment to remind them of the Old Country. The immense solitude of the spacious valley overawed them. The wild beauty of the country, and the promise of more wonders beyond the distant silhouette of the western range, tempted some and appalled others. Here was an immensity of land, rich in soil and timber, and so well watered as almost to overwhelm the immigrant's mind.

The three prime requisites for carving generous homesteads from this boundless region were courage, hardihood, and a fair share of what mortals term "luck."

It was fairyland for some. For others it was peopled by demons. It promised the wealth of the Indies, but danger was in every trail. One could go any and everywhere and trespass none. Yet one might meet death face to face in carrying a bucket to the nearest stream, or spring.

Among drawbacks was the immigrant's ignorance of the red man, and the latter's ideas of proprietorship. The newcomers, beholding what appeared to be an empty continent, believed unlimited acreage was theirs. Once they learned that the red man claimed all the land they challenged any such title. They could not know that every Indian required five square miles as his hunting preserves. Nor did they realize that the clearing of large tracts by burning the forests destroyed the sanctuary for game animals and birds, while every white settlement drove the game away.

Early grants of land made by the tribes, from the District of Maine to far south, were obtained by the whites through a misunderstanding. The settler believed he had purchased an immense extent of woodland and meadows by handing over a jug of rum and some colored beads. The original proprietors understood they were granting, charitably, hunting rights to the newcomers.

Once we had arrived at the Grant my two companions abandoned me, as one might drop a surplus kitten to make its own faring. Nor did I expect them to stand in the place of parents, or guardians. I was duly grateful for their company; and I had no doubt but what I could shift for myself as laborer, husbandman, scout, or hunter. Yet I could see that fear ever was brooding over the settlement, even as the people gossiped, or worked. While they talked their gaze ever was searching the forest crown for strange smokes. Their faces wore an expression of apprehension, much as one might see in the face of a little child who is afraid of the dark.

Captain Pinau must have advertised my ability as a woods runner, as I was early accosted by three men who, I presumed, spoke for the community. They bluntly announced they wished me to range the forest and guard the settlement against surprise attacks.

I inquired:

"Of course you have scouts out?"

"Some of our younger men are out; but they don't go far for fear of being lost," answered an ancient man.

Another added:

"The farthest any have gone is to a natural bridge of rock on the upper waters of the James. Captain Pinau says you have a mortally prime gun and have bickered much with the northern tribes."

"I have hunted the Abnaki and have been hunted by them," I acknowledged. "I came here, as have you, to till the soil and put in crops and make me a home."

In truth, my heart was uneasy. I feared the Iroquois, Shawnee and Cherokees much more than I did the Abnaki. And the last were brave and cruel enough. But the Mohawks collected tribute from the Abnaki, a beaten people, and were so many Satanic tigers when on a red path.

An ancient man next spoke, his tone querelous. His quavering voice complained.

"They make believe to be friendly, but all the time they are spying on us to learn our strength and weakness. They come here, one or two, and beg food and rum, and look around. The Lawd only knows when they will strike! We have two men on guard over every man hewing out logs for a house. And that's within pistol-shot of where we be now standing. Look here, young sir." His face screwed up most shrewdly:

"You Yankees like to dicker an' trade. You take to the woods and watch out for Injuns. We'll put up a cabin for you, and see to it that you git cabin rights. We will give you a good harvest of corn,

although you've planted none. And the planting season is ended. And all this without no outlay of money or hard work on your part."

"But if none of the savages are near, then I am being paid for nothing," I reminded him.

"Yet they've been mortal close," insisted the ancient. "Cap'n Pinau has told me about the burned cabin up the Ridge, and the dead man baking in the coals."

"Pinau is a sound man. He understands Indians," I assured the committee. "He is endorsed by Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts. He also is highly recommended by William Johnson, of New York Colony, who promises to go far in controlling the Long House."

The third man, speaking in a whisper, said:

"I wish we could feel as sure about this man Michi."

I laughed aloud at the suggestion that the clumsy, obsese antiquarian possessed any cunning. I assured the settlers, "Michi has but one line of thought: to prove that the ancient Carthaginians were the first people in this New World."

Reverting to the savages, I remarked that the Powhatans were the most immediate menace, although they were far less powerful since they had their last bickering with Captain John Smith. I added:

"If the Cherokees ever make a real peace with the Iroquois, all on this frontier will be in a fair way of being butchered. Nor will the towns nearer the coast be safe. The Iroquois carry French axes and guns."

"Aye, aye," mumbled the ancient. "All you say shows you understand our peril and be the man for the work. You scout up and down the valley on the lookout for war-bands. We'll supply you with lead 'n' powder, give you crop and build you a stout cabin."

"Your terms are generous enough," I frankly admitted. "But you must have men here, who know the country beyond the Natural Bridge far better than I do."

The spokesman of the trio shook his head, and explained, "Much heavy work has kept us, young and old, close to this settlement." I suspected in all truth he might as honestly have added, "And much fear." And yet this was scarcely generous, when one remembered they were but recently arrived from across the seas, and were entirely ignorant of red warfare, let alone the country. It was not surprising they had so much to learn.

THE upshot of all this talk was my agreement to take to the woods and seek for fresh signs of any lurking enemy. In return I was to receive a stout cabin, fifty acres of land, and enough corn to last me through the winter. They were turning away to resume their labors when I beheld a black man, magnificently muscled. He was standing with his back to us, and was wearing only a loin cloth. He looked like an ebony statue. I pointed him out, and inquired, "Whose slave is that?"

"Just a poor, hardworking soul, who only asks for food."

The fellow half turned, as if sensing he was being mentioned. One glance, and I was saying, "He's a runaway slave. He is wanted in Norfolk." I had recognized him as the big Guinea, once the property of Planter Dee.

"He does the work of five men. We do not know he is a slave," was the rather sullen reply.

I rather doubted this statement. None of the planters would permit valuable property to wander around west of the Ridge. He was legal property, and Virginia was as quick to enforce her property rights as was any other colony. The black must have sensed that he was being observed, for he swung about and gazed our way, and instantly recognized me. With a hoarse cry he dropped his

ax and bounded away as if old Sathan was after him with a red hot iron.

"Now we've lost one of our best workers," grumbled the ancient. "Why did you scare him off?"

"I must have a very homely face. He did but look at me," I said. "He can come and go, stay or flee, and I won't turn a hand to send him back. Even if there is five pounds reward for his return."

"So, so," mumbled the ancient. "Five pounds. That sum is hard come by these days." And his rheumy eyes stared at the growth where the Guinea had disappeared.

I bethought me to ask for Cantil and the Bird Woman, and was told that the former had been in the settlement but a few hours.

"He seemed to want to be alone," explained one of the men. "Mayhap, she is living with the red savages. The woman came here, but did not stop. That is, some of the people said she was a witch, and she hurried away."

"Then you all were fools," I hotly averred. "No savages will attack a settlement where she is stopping. She goes among them as she will. She was captured by them when very young. She can make this clearing alive with the mating songs of birds, and yet no bird be here."

"That's all too late now. Both Guinea and witch-woman have been driven out," mumbled the head of the committee. "Looky here, Watson, you carry out your side of the bargain, and we'll do our part."

"I'll be in the forest early in the morning," I promised. "I shall need some hard bread and a pouch of parched corn. For the rest I'll live off the country." This was agreed to, but from the mumbled remarks I could see the settlers were regretting their lack of hospitality toward the Bird Woman.

I sought Pinau and Michi and told them of my new work. The Frenchman warned me to guard against war-bands from the Ohio. Michi was inclined to stress caution against the Cherokees and the Shawnees. It was obvious I was about to enter a red ring of peril. The more they talked, the more I perceived my task easily might become a very dangerous occupation.

While they were running on, a settler came up, whom I assumed to be a man. I soon learned she was Polly Mulholin, the stalwart English woman. I knew she would ask odds of no man when it came to work.

I accosted her courteously, which seemed to puzzle her for a moment. Then she was revealing a mouthful of big, white teeth. She was a strapping specimen for her sex. In truth, she would have passed for a man anywhere. We were made known to each other, and she tarried to hear the talk. Pinau gravely advised me:

"I don't think the work is for you. You don't know the country; nor the ways of the savages. You can't tell by sight which come from the Ohio, or from the south. I advise you to stick close to this settlement until you get acquainted with the company."

"My way of thinking, mister," boomed the woman's deep voice.

Michi tossed up his fat hands in a gesture of disgust, and demanded:

"How can he ever know the country if he doesn't enter it? He has courage. He has fought the fierce Abnaki in the northern wilds. He leaves behind no wife, or child, to unnerve him. He has no kin down here, whatever."

"It's his risk," quietly said Pinau. "But it would better if I went in his place. I would know how to handle the savages."

"But you had to go for the first time into the wilderness," argued Michi.

"If our young friend should discover a large body of Indians, or even a scout-band, he will not wait to get acquainted

He will return here on the jump, and leave the rest to the settlers."

"There is a red-headed murderer somewhere in this valley," continued Pinau. "Find the Bird Woman and you will find him. The savages think his fiery hair is a strong medicine. Get him to come here and act as our scout."

Knowing Cantil's hate for aught that would serve Old England, I shook my head, saying:

"I know him better than anyone else in Virginia. He can mix with the savages, but he never will do a good service for this colony."

"Damn him, then," spoke up the Mulholin woman. "Kill him!"

"I would have but small liking for Virginia had I stood in his skin," I said.

Pinau shrugged his shoulders and said:

"So be it, young *m'sieur*. But remember you will have amply done your duty if you travel beyond the Natural Bridge. If you sight the enemy, and fear you can't win in a long race, start two fires some distance apart. Heap on some green stuff. Two smokes will warn us of your discovery as thoroughly as if you made a report in person."

I was wondering what would happen to me if I tarried to make smokes with the savages close at hand.

"The savages will expect you to make for this settlement in a direct course," the Frenchman continued. "Instead of doing that double back to the west, if the way be open. Then turn back in a wide half circle."

"That is good advice, my young friend," boomed Michi. "And remember to look for ancient inscriptions on rocks."

Polly Mulholin gave me a steady glance, sniffed derisively, and said:

"Young fool! You stick here. I'll go, armed only with a chopping ax."

Perhaps I was unwise in persisting on the venture. I had no doubt but what the Mulholin woman could fair vastly better at the work than ever I could. I lost no time in procuring some cold meat and parched corn.

Early that evening the settlement was rejoicing because of the arrival of Ben Borden. He readily endorsed my plans for scouting the enemy, but he insisted it would be he who would give me cabin and land, and assure me of a crop. He further pleased me by saying he would give me a shilling a day while I was scouting. He could talk with me apart but briefly as all the settlers were swarming forward to hear the news from the towns. I winced when he said the hunt was up for a Norfolk murderer; and he told the gaping circle about the murder of Dee. He also knew about the escape of the Bird Woman. In this connection, he added:

"It will be better for all, if she keeps away from this Grant."

Strenuous objections were promptly taken to this statement, inasmuch as many believed, witch though she might be, she was a stout buffer between the cabin-folks and the red raiders. I attempted to speak again with him aside, but the men and women were too curious for news.

When I did think I had a chance to talk with him, he turned abruptly away to meet a newcomer. This man would have held my attention none, if not for the long-stemmed pipe he was smoking, and the aroma therefrom. Instead of withdrawing to catch up some sleep I waited until Borden was alone. I rejoined him and inquired:

"That man with the long pipe. He is one of your settlers?"

"One of our hunters. Why do you ask?"

"He smokes kinnikinick, the Indian's tobacco. I first smelled it in the wilds of the District of Maine. There's no real tobacco. Just the inner bark of the willow."

"You telling me something new?" he sharply cut in.

"You might be interested in learning

where he acquired his taste for that red brand of smoking."

At once he was warning me, and speaking rather warmly:

"I don't want any advice from you, a stranger. You keep your place, or back to the coast you go. That man is one of my best hunters. I don't want forwardness among my people."

"Heaven forbid any such an idea on my part," I replied. "I simply thought you might wish to know why a white man prefers red tobacco, instead of some of the colony's prime Orinoco. He dismissed me abruptly, saying:

"You talk too much. Take care you don't talk yourself off this grant. Be off on your scout early in the morning."

After a Watson is rebuffed about so much he will realize that his view-point is not appreciated. Borden was a good man, and fair in his dealings, and always keeping his word. These and other virtues I was to appreciate after a longer acquaintance with him. If he were irascible at times, one must remember his worriments that made him thus. He possessed a huge grant of land, but the same was his only so long as he could hold it against the red tribes, and the French.

Borden amazed me by saying, "You are a Watson. You've heard of Black Watson?"

"An uncle, sometimes called that, was drowned at sea. Why do you speak of him?"

"My men tell me some evil men were here, asking about him."

Looking back I can see he quite naturally viewed me, a newcomer, as something of an upstart. Dismissed thus peremptorily I wandered about the Grant, getting better acquainted with the settlers. As all these were but newly arrived from England they had but scant comprehension of the country. Some asked me how far away was the Pacific Ocean. They held me to be very ignorant when I told them no one knew.

Nor had any of them seen a red man, except it be a glimpse of an aged warrior, who came to the settlement to beg scraps of food and rum. Aside from those who had been herded into armies in the Old World to carry on their master's bickerings, the fighting strength of the Grant was weak.

No one could know what this raw material could do in withstanding a red attack. I feared that the overbold would be slaughtered unless the fighting took place in the open. Some of the men, veterans of various continental wars, made the great error of holding the red man in contempt. When attacked and fighting to save their women and children, our aboriginees would balk at no odds, or danger.

EARLY in the morning I was read to set forth. The woods looked forbidding. Polly Mulholin gave me some coarse bread and a package of parched corn. Borden provided some buckskin clothes that fitted well enough. Polly did not need to warn me to build no fires; but I did appreciate her kindly concern. It was a beautiful country I was penetrating could I have forgotten the Great Warriors' Path, running north and south through the valley. I was glad to be about my acquisition of lands and speedily was in the ancient wood, where twilight dwelt.

There was but little of ground litter, and I had advanced some five miles, due west, over the brown floor, when I found myself "freezing" against the bole of a mighty oak. My action was involuntary, and was taken before I knew the nature of the alarm.

When I picked it up it was a murmurous sound at first, but never that of the wind, soughing through the tops. I traveled ahead cautiously until a crescendo of hoarse laughter brought me to halt again. No red man ever guffawed like that. Proceeding cautiously I heard

the laughter give way to singing, a most crazy lack of precaution, even if the singers be the vanguard of a strong French force. I relaxed when I caught the refrain:

"Then each man to his gun,
For the work must be done
With cutlass, sword and pistol—"

I knew them. I lost my fear of being discovered. They were sailormen, and not even a trifle forest-wise. It was obvious they had procured strong drink, a direct invitation for the devil to come and remove them from earth. It was quite amazing that such woeful ignorance of forest traps had not already cooked their goose. It behooved me to practice great caution, for I might be close to a circle of savages about to jump them. As they continued their ribald singing it became apparent that as yet no red menace was upon them. When I secured a vantage point which permitted me to see the fellows, I was surprised to discover Black Tug, *vis-a-vis* with his ancient enemy, Moon Face, and the third ruffian.

A stout jug, presumably containing rum, explained their vocal performance.

At the end of the refrain Moon Face hoarsely declared, "John Gow was a better man than Red Hand. Devil eat my boots if he wasn't! I can hear him now, bellowing to the steersman, 'Lay her aside the la'board bow!' "

"Lay her aside the la'board bow!" I hoarsely repeated.

There was a moment of tense silence, then Black Tug was howling:

"Damnation! Boarded by the devil and ghosts!"

"It's Enoch Watson, of the *Walter Raleigh*, who hails you. What colors are you flying?"

After a count of three they were recovering their wits and losing their fright. Black Tug heartily called out, "Never the black flag when you bear down, us, Enoch my lad. Drown your hooks and lower a boat and come aboard."

Assuming they were friendly I advanced. Apparently they had formed some truce among themselves. But once I was standing close by the group I observed a glint in Moon Face's eyes, which suggested I had done better to have sheered off. He greeted:

"Oh, it's you, you bloody mud-bird. Tug says you carry the name of Watson. Any relation to a Watson, a sailorman?"

"My uncle, Black Watson, went down his ship some time back."

"Say you so. But you are alive and you tripped me up on the tavern green."

"To save you from killing your old friend, Tug," I defended. "I'm scouting for Borden's Grant. I expect no trouble from white men, 'less they be French.

"Frenchies. God 'a' marcy on 'em if we run foul of such!" Even as Moon Face was mouthing this sentiment, I discovered their drink was brandy, and that the jug was not of English make. Moon Face grinned hideously and remarked:

"Your uncle told you about some hidden treasure?"

"No!"

"And he's sunk to his rest in the ocean?" he repeated, his eyes leering.

"I have told you that."

"It's logged for the last time. And if he could come back to life he never would be a shipmate of the bloody French?"

"Certainly not!" I indignantly replied.

Black Tug leaned his head sleepily against a tree, yawned widely, and as his companions were eyeing me with feral gaze, he slightly moved his head in a distinct gesture for me to withdraw.

Moon Face suddenly blinked his pig eyes, rested a hand too close to a long pistol thrust through the discolored red sash, and asked the third man:

"What does Stout Dick Joals say?"

"When in doubt scuttle the ship'n send 'em all below. Then cruise 'round

till we l'arn something about that buried treasure," chanted Joals.

I carelessly shifted my long Kentucky gun so that the muzzle bore upon Moon Face's chest. His pig eyes dilated. Instantly he was the quintessence of rollicking good nature. There came the old heartsome laughter to preface the stentorian invitation:

"Fill up, my boys! All hands on deck to splice the main-brace. Here's hopin' Black Watson never sunk to his rest in no wreck."

When Joals, his pig eyes evil, extended the jug to me, I guessed his purpose, and covered him with my long gun. He violently drew back and swore most foully.

I told them:

"I'm scouting for Frenchmen and Indians. You men are crazy to get half seas over out here in the Indian country. If any be within a quarter of a mile they have heard you, and by this time are making for you. Look out, or your hair will be in a Shawnee fire. I don't know why you harp on my uncle's name. He's dead on the floor of the ocean."

With that I stepped behind a tree and before a man-jack of them could take offensive I was a score of feet away and circling their camp. I could hear Moon Face cursing my vitals most foully. I held my position, anxious to know whither the trio was traveling. But they remained with the drink, talking in undertones. They did not seem to have any objective; yet it was a queer performance to retire to the forest in order to carouse.

Finally my patience was rewarded by the sound of a shrill whistle in the east. One of the Red Brethren gave answer. Curious enough, I watched, and soon was glimpsing a fleeting shadow, moving noiselessly from tree to tree. It spoke well for the fellow's woodcraft that he maintained this furtive approach, although he must have felt assured he was nearing a rendezvous of friends. For a bit he vanished entirely, and when he reappeared he was standing before the red seamen. I then knew he must be a rare woods-runner.

But my heart gave a violent jump when I sighted his face and recognized him as the Borden Grant man who preferred kinnikinick to honest-to-goodness tobacco. I was vastly interested. Moon Face talked rapidly and gesticulated with both hands. Black Tug tried to speak, but his companions silenced him with menacing gestures. The scout nodded his head and, soft-footed as any northern lynx, he started in my direction. I silently slipped deeper into the ancient wood. It was as plain as my fist he was seeking me.

TO BE CONTINUED.

MAN FROM HORSE HEAVEN

By WILLIAM S. WELLS

HE CAME INTO the Three Rivers country when the last snow lay in the gullies and river bottoms, a lanky, rawboned youth with guileless, greenish-blue eyes and a mop of tow-colored hair under a battered Stetson. He drove a spring wagon with a lumpy, tarpaulin-covered load.

At the somnolent county seat of Judah, he parked his wagon and flea-bitten horse at a hitching rack, ambled into the office of the county clerk and languidly draped himself on the counter.

"I'm from over Horse Heaven way," he drawled. "Name of Haskins—Lou Haskins. Aim to settle around here and run me a couple of cattle, mebbe. Where's they the likeliest piece of land a feller could homestead on around here?"

The lantern-jawed county clerk wasted no time in deliberation of the question. He spat in the general direction of the cuspidor.

"Ain't none," he stated with flat finality. "What free land is fit to use, old Cliff Marks figures is his range. He don't cotton none to nesters, fact is, he's got ways and means of makin' it damn unhealthy for 'em. It's agin the law, but what the hell. Sheriff used to be Mark's foreman. I'd advise you to head right back to this Mule's Heaven of yourn, if you're lookin' to settle."

The rawboned youth unwound himself from the counter. "Horse Heaven,"

he corrected mildly. "I dunno. This looks like right nice country. Reckon I'll look around a piece. I might be in later on, to file me a claim. So long."

As he departed, a mustached individual in a sheepskin coat came into the office, vigorously blowing his nose. "Who's the sand-hill crane?" he queried.

The clerk shrugged. "Some yokel, says he hails from Horse Heaven, wherever that is. Aims to homestead around here."

The mustached man wagged his head sadly. "Reckon I better go tell Charley," he said with dark foreboding. "He just got in a new shipment of coffins. There might be one long enough for that jasper."

Traversing the Three Rivers range in his jolting wagon, cheerfully unaware that he was a subject of professional interest to Charley, the local undertaker, Lou Haskins presently came upon a wide, timbered and grassy little valley with a copious spring at its upper end from which a willow-lined creek flowed down through the green flats. Surveying the valley with a brightening eye, he promptly pulled up his wagon alongside the spring, unearthed from his load a saddle which he flung on the flea-bitten horse, and rode blithely back to Judah to file his notice.

The morose county clerk sighed as he recorded the notice. "Don't say as I didn't warn you," he muttered. "Marks sets some store by that spring. Howsomever, it's your funeral, I reckon."

Lou Haskins blinked his greenish eyes. "Over Horse Heaven way, we don't set much stock by that kinda stuff. Is that there recorded all proper now, mister?"

Pausing at the post office to mail a letter addressed to "Mrs. Sally Haskins," the man from Horse Heaven rode back to his new possession, dug an ax from his wagon and set about the construction of a one-room log cabin on the little knoll rising above the spring. He had raised the walls and was pondering on problems of roof construction, when a bearded man riding a barebacked horse came in some haste down the valley and pulled up short in shocked amazement at the sight of the half-built cabin and its architect.

"You ain't aiming to homestead here, be you?" he gasped. "Brother, you better pull out quick before Marks' killers find you out. They burnt me out last night, over on Jack Creek. Gimme twenty-four hours to leave, and you bet I'm doin' same. Man, you'd better git, too! It ain't healthy here!"

The bony face of Lou Haskins did not alter its bland expression, but the green shade of his eyes seemed to deepen a trifle.

"Burned you out, did they?" he said sympathetically. "Hm. We'd never put up with such, over Horse Heaven way. This ain't such a bad country, though. Reckon I'll stick around."

The bearded man gaped at him, then with a furtive glance over his shoulder, thumped a heel in his horse's flank and vanished rapidly down the valley. Lou Haskins looked after him reflectively, sighed, and putting down his ax he hunted up a scrap of paper and after much pencil-chewing, produced a scrawled missive.

> Dere Sally: I reckon mabe you better not come for a wile yet. This is a rite nice place, but theres a litel cleanin up to do, an best you dont come yet. Will let you no wen its all OK. Lots of love an kisses.
>
> Yr lovin husband, Lou Haskins

Thrusting the note in his shirt pocket, he saddled up his horse; then as an afterthought he buckled about his waist a belt from which dangled a holster containing an ancient and heavy Colt. Thus equipped, he rode hastily to Judah, where he purchased envelope and stamp and mailed his letter. The day was cold, and a raw wind had sprung up from the snow-clad mountain slopes, and after a

moment of indecision he wandered into the nearest saloon for a little something to warm him against the return ride.

He was just finishing his drink when a hard and ungentle finger tapped him on the shoulder. He revolved leisurely, to gaze innocently into a pair of predatory eyes set close alongside a jutting beak of a nose. Thin lips under a wispy black mustache said harshly, "Be you the buzzardly nester that squatted on Gunstock Spring?"

Lou Haskins eyed him serenely. "That what they call it? Kinda funny name. Why, yeh, I've staked me a homestead there."

The thin lips twisted. "All right, wise *hombre*. This is your first and last warning. That's Mark's range. Don't be there tomorrow. Get it?"

Lou's deep green eyes batted slightly, then without further preliminary he crunched a booted heel on the other's instep, and as the man straightened with a yell of pain, in one simultaneous motion Lou smashed a bony fist to his jaw and kicked him in the pit of the stomach. The beak-nosed man crashed in a crumpled heap under the wreckage of an overturned table. A couple of hard-faced citizens who had leaped to their feet subsided abruptly as Haskins gently waved his heavy hogleg in their direction.

"Over Horse Heaven way," he stated mildly, "we don't like to be spoke to thataway."

With a negligent wave of the Colt, he backed out of the door. As he reached the sidewalk outside, a hoarse voice rose within the saloon.

"Will somebody tell me," it queried in awed accents, "where in hell is Horse Heaven?"

JOGGING slowly back to Gunstock Spring, Lou Haskins' eyes were serene and unclouded, but there was a stubborn and rocklike set to his bony jaw. However, as he came within sight of the spring, that jaw dropped a trifle and he blinked in amazement. Beside his wagon a saddled buckskin pony was nibbling the rich grass with great relish, while a female form in a man's blue shirt and overalls was studying the unfinished cabin with an air of proprietorial interest. Lou rode up hastily and sprang from his horse.

"My land, Sally!" he exclaimed. "How ever did you get here so quick? I just wrote a letter off tellin' you not to come for a while yet."

The young lady turned with a start, then flung herself into his arms and kissed him with great vigor. Then she stood off and regarded him with liquid black eyes.

"Why, Lou Haskins, why in the world shouldn't I come?" she demanded. "You wrote that you'd found a nice place to settle, and was getting a cabin up, and all. And here we weren't only married a couple of weeks when you up and pulled off looking for a place to homestead. I was getting awful lonesome. And ain't this just the loveliest little place, only you better hurry and get the roof onto this cabin, 'cause it looks like rain."

Lou's glance was vaguely troubled. "Course I'm glad you came, honey, only you oughtn't have rode all the way here all by yourself. I've missed you a lot. But I'd rather you hadn't come just yet. You see, well, that is, there's a little trouble goin' on, that I wouldn't want you should be mixed up in."

Sally's melting gaze consigned trouble to the realm of lesser affairs. "You are the beatingest man, Lou Haskins," she declared. "If there's any trouble, all the more reason I ought to be here to keep an eye on you! And anyway, I brought my daddy's old carbine. Now you set to work and get that roof up, while I start moving in our furniture. I do hope the stove ain't rusted!"

Nevertheless, Lou's brow was bent as he cut and trimmed the logs and

rolled them into place, and at intervals he muttered, "Dang it!" with deep feeling. Also, he kept the Colt buckled around his waist and cast an occasional watchful glance around the timbered hills and the willow-lined creek. However, nothing untoward happened, and by nightfall, under Sally's admiring regard he had the roof completed and roughly chinked with moss. Later, he decided, he would cover it with split shakes, but for the present it would do. After a supper which greatly lessened his disapproval of Sally's too hasty arrival, they slept peacefully and undisturbed, though Lou took care to see that the carbine stood in handy reach at the head of the bed.

In mid-afternoon of the next day, Lou went down to the spring to fetch a pail of water. He was just straightening with the filled bucket when a cold and unpleasant voice adjured him to drop that there pail and elevate his hands. With a tensed slowness, he obeyed, to gaze into the muzzle of a gun below the savage eyes and beak nose of the man to whom he had given the drastic lesson in ethics in the Judah saloon. The man sat a pinto horse, and flanking him were two other hard-eyed riders.

"You was told to move on," said the beak-nosed one thinly. "We don't give but one warnin'. You'll take the consequences now. Kick me in the belly, will you, you —— —— nester scum!"

Lou cast one glance toward the cabin; then his knobby features went utterly immobile. Watching with agate-green eyes as the black muzzle lined deliberately on his chest, he shifted his feet a little and his right shoulder dropped imperceptibly. But even as his hand flashed down, from the cabin window came the sharp crack of a carbine, and the beak-nosed man's bullet went into the air as he pitched backward off his horse. In the diversion, Lou's gun came out and he shot the second man neatly in the stomach. Number three fired one wild shot, then whirled his horse and crashed through the willows, speeded by a second shot from the carbine and two slugs from Lou's Colt.

Lou holstered his gun, looked askance at the very dead body of the beak-nosed man and the second limp form at the creek bank, sighed deeply, and picking up his pail of water, trudged up the knoll. The liquid-eyed Sally was calmly running a rag through the barrel of the carbine.

"There!" she said triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you it was better I was here to keep an eye on you? What did those men want to shoot you for, Lou, honey?"

Setting down the pail, Lou very gently took the weapon from her hands and pressed a satisfying kiss on her full lips.

"Why, I had a little argument with some fellers," he said noncommitally. "It's part of that trouble I was speakin' of. Don't you worry no more about it."

But when presently, spade in hand, he descended to the creek bank to dispose of the two stiffening forms sprawled in the willows, his eyes were pensive.

"If they ain't stopped, them fellers is gonna make more trouble, right off," he muttered as he set about digging a wide and deep hole. "Dang it, they ain't nobody gonna make it hard for Sally!"

As he finished his job and tamped down the last shovelful of earth above the bodies of the late unlamented, he gazed into space a moment, rubbed his jaw thoughtfully, then with a muttered "Dang it all!" strode down to the pole corral where he saddled up his flea-bitten horse. Presently he thrust his head inside the cabin, where Sally was cheerfully kneading a batch of biscuit dough.

"I gotta go see some fellers, honey," he announced. "I might be a mite late gettin' back for supper, so don't wait on me. When I come back, I'll holler. If I don't holler, it won't be me, and you'd best shoot 'em."

With which involved admonition, he mounted his horse and rode purposefully off.

THE COWMAN Cliff Marks was a cold-eyed, heavy-bodied man with a ruthless jaw and thin lips beneath a grizzled mustache. Claiming for his domain a vast range of fertile and legally open land, he enforced his claim by his own means, and the men who rode for him were picked with an eye to their value in keeping his usurped domain free of rustlers, nesters and similar annoyances. The three men with whom he sat around a table in the bunkhouse that night in the yellow glow of an oil lamp were fair samples of that stony-eyed breed who lived by their guns and could be counted on not to be too particular about the use to which those guns were put. Besides a lean and sallow individual with a drooping lip, and a stocky, stubble-faced man in a calf-skin vest, the fourth at the table was a slim and dark-faced man with unblinking black eyes, whose infrequent speech held a Texas slur and who wore his gun tied low. The lamplight caught a feral glint in all their eyes as they listened to the words of the lean, droop-lipped man.

"They's two of 'em there now," he was saying darkly. "Sligo had this Haskins rube covered, when the other 'un opened up from the cabin and knocked Sligo plumb off his horse. The rube plugged Whitey and then they both cut down on me. I just got away in time, you betcha!"

Yellow teeth showed beneath Marks' mustache. "Sligo always was a damn fool," he said coldly. "Why didn't you pot him from cover instead of riding up open that way? Then you could have smoked out the other skunk easy."

"We didn't know they was but one of 'em," muttered the lean man sullenly. "That rube ain't no slouch neither. He went for his gun when Sligo had the drop on him!"

Marks grunted. "Well, I reckon there'll be enough this time to settle their hash for both of 'em. You pick up Jones and Durango at the Frog Prairie line camp. And see that you don't bungle this time. I'm paying you fellows to keep nesters off my range, see. Better get going now. It's plenty dark enough."

With a scrape of chairs the three prepared to rise, but the motion was arrested abruptly as the lamp flame flared in a cold draft and the door swung open gently to admit a tall and gangling figure. He closed the door and slouched with his shoulder blades against it, studying them with expressionless agate-green eyes which came to rest on the granite stare of Marks, facing him across the table.

"I take it you're Mister Marks," he said gently. "I'm Lou Haskins, from over Horse Heaven way, and I've done filed on Gunstock Spring. My wife Sally, she's come out here now and I don't want that anybody should make trouble for her. Mister Marks, I want that you should tell these fellers to leave us alone."

There was a flat, mirthless laugh from the Texan, who had slid to his feet in a loose crouch. Marks' eyes were points of cold flame as his hand dropped to the gun-butt at his thigh.

"I'm running the Three Rivers range and I allow no stinking nesters! I'll give you one minute to get out of here, and you and your woman one hour to be out of the country. Now get!"

Lou Haskins' green eyes batted. "Mister Marks, that there is free land. You got no call to go killing people and driving them off and such. We're peaceable folk over Horse Heaven way and we

don't hold with all this killing. You got no right—"

He was empty-handed as Marks' gun came up over the edge of the table, but the three shots seemed to blend in one thunderous crash. As the dark Texan spun cursing, clutching a shattered shoulder which would never again serve to draw gun, the thick body of Marks collapsed sagging in his chair, utter surprise in his glazing stare and a spreading crimson blotch above his heart.

In a shocked silence broken only by the thick oaths of the wounded killer, above his smoking barrel Lou Haskins turned eyes of green ice from the sagging body in the chair to the remaining two henchmen. With an elaborate care, the lean man laid his hands in full view on the table top, moistening his lips. Stubble-face lifted his shoulder-high, and both remained unmoving as Lou deftly removed their gun-belts and that of the now venomously silent Texan. Draping them on his arm, he paused at the doorway with a glance of grave deprecation at the slumped body of the ranchman.

"I was afraid he wouldn't listen to reason," he sighed. "He mighta knowed that no good would come of all this killin', and tryin' to hog what other folks was entitled to. Makes it hard for peaceable folks to get along."

His eyes went ice-green again as they swung to the killers sitting motionless beside their late employer. "Now that Mister Marks ain't runnin' things no more, there won't be nothin' for your kind to do around here. And without his backin', you ain't liable to be so popular. I wouldn't be around here much more, was I you fellers. I'd hate for there to be any more trouble."

And with a sad wag of his head at the prospect, dangling his captured guns, the man from Horse Heaven sidled through the door and mounted his flea-bitten horse.

The Mystery Of The Missing Helmsman

THE jar of his vessel grounding awakened Captain Ivan Cunningham of the oil tanker *Texaco No. 2* at three o'clock in the morning. Bound for Rockland, Maine, she was stranded off Rockport Light, ten miles from her port.

Having ascertained that his vessel was not badly damaged and in no danger, the skipper looked for the helmsman with the intention of saying a few words. The helmsman, Rufus King, apparently had no desire to hear the skipper's speech and did not respond.

The incoming tide lifted the tanker off the rocks and she got under way again. Captain Cunningham then felt free to search for King but could not find him. Arrived at Rockland, the captain reported King missing and possibly drowned; he might have been flung overboard when the craft grounded.

But Rufus was all right. Police located him asleep in his home at Port Clyde, twenty miles the other side of Rockland. After piling up the ship he simply decided to quit his job and stayed on the rocks when she sailed away.—Emory Black.

A Novelette

HOT PAPA, U. S. N.

By GEORGE BRUCE

THE POUNDING of feet and the storm of enthusiastic applause which bounced against the auditorium roof of the San Diego Naval Training Station subsided by degrees. Under the light over a boxing ring, set up in the center of the hall, handlers were throwing bathrobes about the sweating, panting bodies of two lightweights. A moment before the two lightweights had been blurs of action in the center of the ring, and their gloved fists had been thudding against the ribs and jaws. For six rounds they had danced around, and had fought like enraged bantams. At the end of the sixth round when the final bell rang, they grabbed at one another with sodden gloves, hugged one another, pounded one another on the head affectionately, and had danced away to corners.

The white-uniformed multitude within the auditorium gave them a tremendous hand.

But there was an atmosphere within the hall which conveyed the impression of the big moment yet to come. The applause gave way to a babble of conversation. There was a suppressed excitement, an air of waiting, of expectancy. Bets being made. Then a sudden silence.

A chief petty officer climbed into the ring and lifted his hand. At the same instant two figures clad in bathrobes stepped on the rosined surface from opposite corners of the ring, shuffled feet against the canvas, beat gloves together and looked out over the crowded auditorium.

A yell broke from the throats of the white-uniformed men. A nervous, tense yell. The men were sitting on the edges of chairs. Even the officers of the sta-

tion and their guests, sitting in the first rows of seats, were moved by the excitement.

The C.P.O. in the ring bawled out in the voice of Stentor.

"Next and final bout—six rounds—for the 140 pound championship of the station! In this corner, Bill Walker! On my left—Joe Burke. Lieutenant Harkness—referee!"

In the midst of an uproar the two gladiators stepped into the center of the ring for instructions. Each of them kept his head lowered. They listened. They whirled. They went back to corners. The robes were stripped from their bodies revealing hard muscles and beautiful conditioning. They might have been nineteen years old.

A gob nudged another gob in the ribs. "Get a load of this!" he begged in a voice hoarse with excitement. "This is the fireworks! A grudge fight. Them boys are going to murder each other. Jeez! They been working on this fight for a month. Trainin' like slaves."

"How come?" asked the fellow gob. "What the hell are they sore at each other for?"

There was a pitying look from the first gob.

"Listen mate," he said, "when you been here more'n a week you'll understand. Them two guys came here buddies, get it? They enlist from the same town. They're like brothers. Only one guy is bats about engineering, and the other guy can't see anything but the deck force. Well, Walker—he's the sandy-haired kid—is trying to get his buddy, Burke—he's the black headed egg—to go in for engineering, and Burke gives him the horse laugh, and it starts from there. They spend all their time arguing—and it gets hotter and hotter. After a while the whole damn station is in the argument, and it's engineering against deck. Them two eggs just naturally start to study their heads off and to work like hell, just to show the other guy up. Then when we have the elimination bouts for the champeenship, Walker and Burke is entered in the same class and they fight each other to a draw. Cripes! What a fight! They just stand toe to toe and slug for six dizzy rounds and neither of them will give an inch. Murder! That's what it was! And now, they're going to battle for the station champeenship. Ain't that a riot? Two guys gettin' all peeved up over which is better engineering or deck!"

"Hell!" snorted the second gob. "Anybody knows the answer to that one. The deck is the only place for a white man."

The first gob suddenly snorted hard through his nose.

"Why, you gosh-darned tramp!" he bellowed. "I'll take a sock at your ugly mug! Where the hell do you get off with your lousy deck force? Anybody knows that the guts of the navy is in the engine-room. Where the hell would you deck passengers be if us guys didn't supply the brains to run the ship?"

"Says you!" sneered the second gob.

They were on their feet, truculent, threatening, glaring. Hands crashed down on them from behind.

"Pipe down, you mugs! Who wants to look at you? Get under the seats."

They were pushed back into their places by main force.

THE BELL clanged from the ring. The referee stepped aside. The two warriors dived for the center of the ring. They were carrying hands low. Their eyes were narrowed. Their faces were marked by a queer pallor. The muscles under smooth, youthful skin rippled and surged. There was no time lost in "feeling out." The black-headed fighter feinted with his right and drove his left to the body.

A delirious screech came from the deck

force in the audience. "Get him Joe. Get him, boy!"

The sandy-headed battler stood braced on his feet. His fists pumped. There was the thudding impact of right and left, right and left against Burke's head. The black head bobbed and weaved from side to side. The sandy-headed Walker moved in, ripping punches to the head and body. The referee skipped around. The action was almost too fast to follow. The punches were bouncing off bodies with the sound of a machine-gun in action.

Burke pawed at his nose with a glove and glared at the taut face in front of him. Bill Walker's face—his fighting face. The same face Burke had seen a hundred times back there on the High School football field—playing in the same backfield. Bill looked like that every time he carried the ball. His eyes narrowed to slits and his jaw got hard and he used his body like a battering ram. The silly sap! Trying to give him an argument! Trying to run his life. Sneering at the deck force! Mooning around over his lousy engines and his lousy boilers!

A fist collided with his jaw. There was a burst of pyrotechnics within his head. That little so-and-so could punch like a heavyweight. He saw Walker dancing away. His face contorted in a grin of derision. He put his head down and charged. Walker met him with two crashing uppercuts that numbed him down to his feet. He drove Walker against the ropes and went to work on his body. He felt his fists thudding into Walker's ribs. He heard Walker pant and grunt. He drove himself off balance with a right which plunged through empty air.

Walker had bounced off the ropes. He clipped Burke with a left hook as he bounced. A curtain of darkness threatened to come down over Burke's eyes. Blood trickled from his mouth. The taste of it was in the back of his throat. He jammed his jaws together and slugged.

The bell clanged. He felt the referee pulling on his shoulder. Dimly he heard the hoarse shouting of the multitude in white.

Somebody was whispering in his ear:

"Stay downstairs! Work on his belly. Keep away from him on the ropes. Don't you know that guy is dynamite if he gets a chance to box and hit? Jeez! Don't you ever learn anything? Work on his belly."

Burke heard his own voice. "Who the hell wants to learn anything. I just want one smack at his kisser!"

Then the bell again. The two of them running to get at one another. Standing there, arms driving, blood and sweat running over slippery bodies. Heads jolting with the smack of gloves. Bellies red from the impact of stinging leather.

"Why don't you give yourself up?" gasped Burke, in close, his head on Walker's chest as he punched. "And all you engineers spend your time out of sight. Nobody will miss you."

"Yeah? Well, when you're dressed up like a monkey, entertaining the admiral —show him this!"

Walker's fist came down in a chopping overhand right. It collided with Burke's eye. The eye popped up, suddenly inflated like a toy balloon. It closed tightly.

Burke pawed with his hands. The referee stepped in between them and looked at the eye.

"Get the hell out of the way," gritted Burke.

The referee flitted out of the range. Burke put his head down and waded in. Twice his hands seemingly buried themselves to the cuffs of the gloves in Walker's body. Then something happened. A dull impact thudded against his jaw.

He fought to keep his knees from sagging. He felt his arms going down like jelly. That black curtain was descending over his eyes. He felt his body smack against the floor. He felt his muscles quivering. He clawed at the canvas. He was trying to fight a way back to his feet. Suddenly his neck seemed to go limp and it was all dark.

In the darkness he heard a far away voice. It was saying, "SIX—SEVEN—EIGHT—"

Then the voice was also swallowed by the blackness.

When the blackness lifted he was lying on his back on a rubbing table. Hands were working over him. Doing something to his eye. His jaw ached. Red lights were exploding in his brain.

A voice spoke soothing words.

"Nice fight, Burke. He clipped you with a lucky punch. Why, you could take him with one hand tied behind your back. You were all tightened up—nervous. That palooka can't fight a lick."

Burke's voice came gurgling from his throat.

"Who can't fight a lick?" he demanded. "Why, you jellyfish, Bill Walker can bat the heads off a dozen mugs like you."

He stopped suddenly. For a minute he had forgotten that he hated Bill Walker's guts. The dirty double-crosser! Coming into the Navy and then running out on his best friend. Joining up with the crummy engineers.

He lifted his body off the table.

"Lemme alone," he demanded.

He lurched toward the showers. He was tortured by a thought. Bill Walker! Jeez! That smack on the jaw had made Bill Walker the one hundred and forty pound champion of the station. Something to crow about. Something to make the lousy engineers chesty. The water stung his bunged up eye.

A voice shouted through the hissing and splashing of the water.

"Don't take it so hard, kid. You'll get him the next time out."

"Will I get him!" demanded Burke. "Say, I'm going to spend the rest of my life houndin' that guy for another fight. He can't knock me out the best day he ever lived. If I never do another thing in this man's Navy I'm going to hit that guy so hard on the chin his whole damned family will think an earthquake happened."

II

CHIEF BOATSWAIN'S MATE GRADY surveyed the serious faces confronting him. Inwardly he shook a dubious head. What was the Navy coming to? Not a man in that line over nineteen. Kids—a damned Navy made up of high school kids! Not a bandy-legged, lantern-jawed, tobacco-chewing, squat-bodied specimen in the lot.

Grady was a hold-over from the old Navy of wooden ships and iron men. Grady had a habit of stalking like a fighting-cock, of walking about on the balls of his feet, his chest and jaw thrust out, his fists clenched and a truculent glare in his eyes. He seemed eternally waiting for someone to dispute his authority. That had been the way of a boatswain's mate in the old days. The rule of the fist, the rule of the blistering tongue which could take the hide off hard bitten able seamen. But who could cuss or glare at kids like these?

Sometimes, when he listened to the men of the new Navy talking together, he felt a sinking sensation within his chest and there was a longing to retire, to get out of the damned "kindergarten." In the old days not even officers used the language these kids used as a matter of course. He remembered the

ports of the world and a roistering crowd of American bluejackets ashore on liberty, taking the port apart for the animal joy of exposing the works, a bellowing, punching, rioting gang that couldn't be stopped by hell or high water. Spending good government money with a lavish hand, swaggering along the Bund or Prado or the Avenue Anglais; getting gloriously drunk and thrown into the brig in every port, coming aboard with black eyes and bloody noses, and reporting proudly to the officer of the deck.

Those were the days!

And now! He snorted within himself, remembered his last cruise on a battlewagon! Ashore on liberty in a dozen countries. And everywhere gobs in sightseeing busses visiting the "points of interest," galloping around in rubberneck wagons, listening to lying guides and sticking noses into guide books. Going through *picture galleries* and *museums!* Riding camels out to the Pyramids, and acting as if they enjoyed it! And the shore police loafing around on the street corners, yawning and bored looking with not so much as a peep or a minute's excitement to break the monotony of such a watch.

The whole damned liberty party reporting back on board, shoes shined, hair combed, faces clean—and sober! Hardly a drunk in the lot and not a fight! The same in every port. And in half a dozen of the ports there had been limey men of war at anchor and limey liberty parties ashore—limey and Dutch and French and Italian, and not a bloody nose or a black eye. Actually going around arm in arm!

It was enough to make an old Navy man sigh and shake a dubious head.

And aboard ship! Gobs sitting around with noses stuck in books. Gobs studying this, and gobs studying that. Reading books with titles Grady couldn't pronounce. Gobs studying for a rating. Gobs with a squeegee in one hand and a Navy Manual in the other. Gobs getting ready to take examinations for the Naval Academy, or studying fire control or navigation or engines! It was a hell of a life. There was no place for a sailor in the whole damned Navy! Half the time when he talked about service in the old days, or the glory of the old Navy, the kids yawned in his face.

Moving pictures on deck every night. The football team practicing here. The basketball team practicing there. The boat crew practicing some place else. Even at sea the baseball team rigged up a batting cage and a pitching cage and kept up the practice. Men talking about bringing the Iron Man aboard at the next competition. The Iron Man—once that meant a real sailor who sailed on wooden ships. Now it meant a statue of a well muscled gent that went to the ship with the best athletic record for the year. Boxers boxing, wrestlers wrestling, swimmers swimming—and not a sailor in the lot. The damned Navy was looking like a college.

Gun crews tumbling into turrets. Gun crews made up of seventeen and eighteen year old kids. Stripped to the waist with their ribs sticking out and their eyes glowing in a funny way. Going in among those big guns and the hundreds of pounds of powder and tons of shells. Being sealed in the turrets with an officer almost as young as themselves and petty officers not old enough to vote, and handling those fourteen and sixteen inch babies like broomsticks.

Coming out, black, sweating, dog-tired and red-eyed, but coming out with a record—coming out with an "E" to paint on the damned turret. Gun crews! Made up of kids able to shoot the eye out of a needle at fifteen thousand yards. And every damned kid in the turret, from the passers to the pointers, know-

ing as much about handling the guns as the gunnery officer in command. And what's more—the gunnery officer knew it!

There was a scowl on Grady's face as he faced the dozen men in the line before him. His eyes glanced from face to face. Here a blond, there a red-head, but most of them black-headed. All of them young and serious . . . and waiting, eyes fixed eagerly on Grady's face. All of 'em volunteers! For a special assignment. Itching to get on with the job.

Twelve candidates to be "Hot Papa" somewhere in the Navy.

He cleared his throat. He ought to make a speech. He ought to lay into these birds. Tell them that this was a serious job, a dangerous job, and a job for he-men. But he had the feeling that every damned man in the line had studied this job out of the special instruction books for a week.

"Don't you birds get the idea that this is a goldbricking watch!" He heard his voice growling at them. "Just because Hot Papa has nothing to do until an emergency arises doesn't make this job soft. You've got to know your stuff, right down to the ground, and you've got to be ready to do it—twenty-four hours a day—seven days a week. Lives depend on what you know and how much guts you've got. You'll never be needed until your ship or your shipmates are dying. Then the whole thing is dumped down in your lap to handle."

The speech was sounding kind of flat. He swung away from the line. This was like talking to a bunch of sphinxes.

There was a pile of equipment on the ground at his side. He delved in it with his two hands. What the hell! He wasn't a college professor. Action—that was what he knew. This job and how to do it. His hands came up holding a strange white garment. It was stiff and awkward, heavy looking. It was shaped like a suit of overalls. It might have been part of a diver's costume, but it was white and fibrous. He held the garment in his hands for the file before him to see.

"Watch me," he ordered tersely. "Learn to put on the equipment. It's important. If you don't know how to use your equipment, you're no good to anybody."

He slipped his legs into the cumbersome trousers and wriggled his arms into the sleeves. There were straps at wrist and ankle. He tightened the straps.

"The asbestos outfit must cover the body completely" he warned the eager students. "Never be careless about putting it on. Every inch of your bodies must be covered. Every inch! See that the wrist straps and the ankle straps are pulled tight. Now—the shoes."

The shoes were like diver's shoes. Not so heavy, but almost as ponderous. They slipped over uniform shoes. They had special clamps which bound the tops close to the legs.

Grady stood in front of the line. He seemed at least twice as big now. His shoulders were enormous. His entire body bulked. His head, thrust out of the neck of the white suit, seemed tiny—far too small for the big body. The line stared at him. There was a smile here and there. He glared at the smiles. Then he picked a helmet up from an assortment of headgear. He slipped it over his head, inserted the breather in his mouth, made fast the clamps which bound the reenforced helmet to the asbestos outfit at the shoulders. The helmet was also asbestos.

He stood there for a moment. In the complete uniform he was sinister looking. Then men in the line could see his fierce blue eyes glaring at them from the window in the face of the helmet. They could see the rise and fall of his chest as he breathed the synthetic air. They

could hear the little choking sound made by the exhaled airs being expelled through the release valve. The canister on his back which contained the breathing chemicals caused him to look deformed.

He moved about to show them that it was possible to walk in the costume. His legs moved with a waddle. Then he trotted ten or twelve yards. The movements were a burlesque on a polar bear trotting about on its hind legs. There was a burst of laughter from the line.

Grady saw the laughter rather than heard it. His hands snatched at the helmet fastenings. He jerked the helmet off his head.

"Funny, is it?" he demanded fiercely. "A damned joke, huh? Well, me buckos, just break ranks and grab yourselves an outfit and put 'em on. If there's anything funny in this I'd like a turn at laughing myself."

THE LINE broke into a dozen units. Each individual took up equipment. The white suits were pulled over bodies. Grady watched them narrowly, looking for something to criticize, something to growl about, but there was nothing. Each of the units duplicated each of the motions he had made in donning his own fireproof outfit. The straps were strapped, the shoes were pulled on and made fast. Then they stood facing him, holding helmets in hands, with the asbestos-covered breathing tubes running back to the canisters strapped between shoulders. They looked like so many deep-sea divers about to make a descent and taking a last breath before helmets were battered down.

Grady inspected the line with meticulous attention to detail. He grunted.

"A prize bunch of mugs you are, to be grinning at your betters. I wonder I don't bust a gut laughin'. You'd made a good collection for some zoo that wasn't particular what brand of animals it displayed."

He took a fire extinguisher from among the equipment and held it loosely between his hands.

"To be any good at this job you've got to have guts enough to walk straight into the mouth of hell itself and do your job. This is no place for a guy who jitters easy, or for a guy who wants to consider himself a good insurance risk. Hot Papas never have anything to do until hell pops. Then he has it all to do, and everything depends on his nerve, coolness and quick action.

"Burke! Step forward!"

Joe Burke stepped out of the line. His right eye was black and swollen. His mouth was puffed. There was a glove bruise on his left cheek-bone. His face was lean and sunburned. Even the asbestos suit could not hide the suggestion of sinewy strength contained in his body. He had a fighting jaw and a questing nose.

The line of students eyed the fire extinguisher.

"In that extinguisher is gasoline under pressure," remarked C.P.O. Grady casually, after a glance of approbation at Burke's battered face and a very faint grin. "I'm going to put on the helmet and parade around in front of you. I want Burke here to put on his helmet. I'm going to have him touch a match to the nozzle of that extinguisher and squirt the flaming gasoline all over me, from head to foot." His eyes glanced quickly at Burke.

"Understand?"

Burke nodded.

"Yes, sir."

Grady pulled his helmet over his head and made fast the clamps. He pulled thick gauntlets over his hands. He nodded to Burke. Burke donned his helmet and gauntlets. He was a little clumsy

handling such a small thing as a match, but there was a flame after an instant which touched the nozzle of the extinguisher. The gasoline, under pressure, roared out of the extinguisher, made an arching stream of hot flame, burned the grass with a white hot heat wherever it touched.

Grady stood still. After a split second of hesitation Burke turned the stream of flame on Grady's body. Grady seemed unperturbed. The line of students stood fast, shielding faces from the heat. They expected to see Grady's uniform scorched black, and to see Grady writhe under the torture of that heat, but Grady walked about in great unconcern, and Burke followed him, keeping the flame playing over his body.

Grady turned and faced them at a distance of thirty feet. He pointed to the glass window of his helmet. Burke turned the hissing, deadly stream full upon the window of the helmet. The flame enveloping Grady's head. It roared up from his shoulders, blotting out the head entirely. He became a pillar of flame, burning from the ground at his feet to a dozen feet above his head.

After a while the extinguisher emptied itself and the flame came to an end. Burke stood with the thing in his hands for a long moment, half blinded by the intensity of the fire, staring at Grady. The gasoline covering Grady's uniform burned itself out. Then Grady took off his helmet. His face was red and sweating, but he grinned at them re-assuredly.

"You'll sweat in there," he promised them.

Then his voice changed suddenly.

"Carlson! You take another extinguisher and do to Burke like Burke did to me. Squirt him good! Make him sweat."

Apprentice Seaman Joseph Burke's hands shook a little as he adjusted his helmet and tightened down the clamps. The mouthpiece of his breather tube felt large in his mouth. The clamps pinching his nostrils together seemed piercing the cartilege of his nose. After a moment he could breathe without discomfort and the valves in the helmet worked with little clicking sounds.

He stood waiting. He saw Carlson light a match, touch it to the nozzle of the extinguisher. A streak of flame leaped toward him. He felt the impact of the flame against his body. It seemed that there was nothing between him and the flame but a single layer of calico. He waited for the heat to fry him; for the hot flame to penetrate the suit.

He forced himself to stand steady, his hands clenched inside the gauntlets. There was a momentary sense of suffocation and a desire to run, to get away from the blazing gasoline hammering at him. But he dug his toes in the ground and stood without moving.

Flame splashed against his face, against his arms and legs. He waited for the glass in the helmet to crack, to let the flame in on his face, to burn out his eyes—but the glass held. There was nothing more than a sensation of terrific heat.

He turned, as Grady had turned, and walked about, and the flame spurted over his body, dripped off onto the ground. Where he walked a wake of flame boiled over the ground behind him. It cascaded from his shoulders, down over his body, onto the earth. He moved in a sea of flame. The air he breathed grew heated. His body seemed dissolving within the asbestos suit. But the flame did not touch him, and after a while the terror of flame rioting within him calmed and he was able to think and act normally.

Then the flame was suddenly gone. The fire extinguisher was empty. There was a desire within him to rip the helmet

from his head and to breathe pure air. He lifted his hands. He saw Grady make a dash toward him, lunging forward in his clumsy suit. Grady was making motions with his hands—angry motions. Grady's shoulder collided with Burke's body.

The impact sent Burke spinning to the ground. Grady was wearing no helmet. He leaped aside after smashing at Burke with his shoulder. The shock dizzied Burke. He tried to climb to his feet. He stood erect after a moment. Through the window in the helmet he saw Burke glaring at him.

He remembered. His body was still swirling with flame from liquid gasoline which drenched him and which was still burning. Removing that helmet, on impulse, would have roasted his face, probably killed him. Just the relief of having that squirting flame ended had tricked him into a near accident. He stood with his arms hanging and permitted the fire on his body to burn itself out.

Grady trotted over to him and unfastened the helmet.

"Of all the pig-headed, dumb saps that ever lived, you're the prize!" he bellowed. "You tryin' to commit suicide to duck this assignment? What's the matter? Are you trying to get me in trouble—trying to get me logged for an accident? Trying to ruin my record?" But all the time he bellowed his eyes were studying Burke's face anxiously.

"I'm sorry," grinned Burke. "I—was so glad to have that damned hose turned off I forgot for a minute."

"In this racket, you don't forget but once," reminded Grady grimly. "One strike and out. That's the rule in this game. One lungful of that flame and you'd have gone home in a casket covered with a little flag. You remember that, you guys!" He glared at the students. "Don't pull any more fool stunts like that. Take your time! Think! Make every move count!"

He drove them. No time to let them think about what might have happened to Joe Burke. They all went through the baptism of fire from the extinguisher.

THE NEXT problem was more dangerous and difficult. There was a flat pool on the ground made of metal. It was filled with liquid to a depth of two or three inches. In the center of the pool was a metal airplane fuselage. Strapped in the cockpit of the fuselage was a dummy. Grady halted the detail at the edge of the pool. He wasted few words.

"The idea is to go in and get the dummy out of the fuselage," he told the group. "This is nothing like standing still and having fire squirted on you. You've got a job to do in there. You've got to open the safety belt around the dummy, lift him out, shelter him from the fire with your body as much as possible—and you've got to work fast. Get it? Fast! Not more than ten seconds in the flame, from the time you go in until you bring the dummy out. And you're moving through a complete wall of fire. O. K. Walk over there, one at a time, look at the fuselage, unfasten the safety belt a few times, carry out the dummy for practice. Then we'll light the fire and do it right."

He stood watching them as man after man waded through the mixture of gasoline and oil in the metal pool. He barked orders. He drove them for greater speed. He snarled at them. Then at last, he said:

"Snap into it, now. Get those helmets on. I'm going to touch her off."

The white, ponderous looking ghosts gathered at the side of the pool. Grady lit a match and tossed it into the liquid in the tank. There was a roar and a rush of flame. Thick black clouds of smoke darkened the sky.

Grady gestured at Burke, stabbed at him with a forefinger and pointed toward the flame. The forefinger said:

"You first!"

Burke gathered himself, sucked hard on the breather tube and plunged headlong into the fire. This was different. One step within the inferno and there was no sense of location, no sense of distance. This was a business of plunging blindly ahead, without seeing anything but red, raving flame. It was like moving through a glaring blindness—fire blindness—hell blindness. Pawing ahead, hands outstretched. Looking for that fuselage. Banging against it in the red darkness. The eyes finally conveying distorted, insane sight to the brain.

The flame roared around the dummy. Burke ducked down into the cockpit. Felt for the body of the dummy with his hands, searched for the safety belt holding the dummy in the seat. His head was whirling. The air going into his lungs was like molten lead. He could feel the inside of his lungs shriveling. He could feel the blood in his veins boiling and bubbling. There was a sudden lightness in his head. He felt that his body was rising—rising—lifting—with the sweep of the flame.

He clung to the sides of the fuselage and tried to force his mind to clear. But the breath going into his lungs was an unbearable agony. He felt the belt around the dummy open under his probing fingers. He lifted the dummy out of the seat. It was an intolerable burden. He staggered under its weights. He whirled—took two strides—fell on his hands and knees with the dummy under his body. It seemed that he did not have strength enough to rise.

A chattering began in his brain. The chattering of approaching death.

Somehow he got to his feet. He plunged forward. The weight of the dummy and the sagging weight of his own body kept him off balance. After three or four off-balance strides he fell again, heavily. The chattering became a scream!

"You're going to die! You're going to burn! You're going to die! You'll never get out of this!"

He surged upward a second time. It seemed that his body swung around with his neck as an axis. It seemed that he was spinning around in circles. He felt the dummy slipping out of his arms. He moaned into the breather tube. He felt his eyes closing. His knees became heated putty—refused to hold him erect. He sagged downward until his hands, under the dummy, supported his kneeling body on the metal of the tank.

It seemed to him that the dummy was wrestling with him; that the dummy had become the rescuer. The dummy's arms were around him. The dummy was lifting him up, arms wrapped under his stomach. He fought fiercely with the dummy. But the dummy was stronger. The dummy dragged him through the fire.

The light of day suddenly burst through the glass of his helmet. He saw Grady's face looking at him. Grady's hands were working frantically at his helmet. There were queer looking beings in white staring at him out of eyes that were jagged with a silent terror. An ambulance wheeled up with a rush. Someone dropped off the back of the ambulance before it had stopped. Then they were putting a clamp over his nose and a rubber mouthpiece over his mouth. He fought for a moment, until he heard Grady's voice barking at him through the dullness within his brain.

"Take it easy, Burke. Take it easy."

He felt a sweet rush of cool, invigorating air in his lungs. The strange air raced through his body, drove the fire out of his lungs and out of his veins. He took great inhalations from the rub-

ber mouthpiece. He wanted to go to sleep. They stripped the asbestos suit from his body. Somebody—a doctor—was examining him with rapid thoroughness. He heard the doctor's voice speaking to Grady.

"No burns. Panic perhaps. Something wrong in the helmet. His breathing apparatus heated up, I guess. He'll be all right."

He closed his eyes. His head cleared a little. His eyes could see again. It seemed that he always saw Grady, first last and always. Grady was hanging over him now. Grady was scowling, but Grady's eyes were anxious. Grady's voice was biting with sarcasm.

"You Burke! A swell job you did! Listen: when you dive into a fire like that you're supposed to come out at the spot you go in. Get it? Shortest way in and out. Remember, if you have a living man in your arms and you're bringing him out of a fire, every split second counts. You can't go wondering around, stumbling, looking for a way out. Sometimes there is only one way out—and that's the way you went in. You've got to remember everything, especially your bearings."

Burke heard his voice, a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry."

"What happened," continued Grady, "was that you lost your head when your breather apparatus got hot. It made you lightheaded and dizzy. Listen. . . . You've got to be able to breathe fire and brimstone in this racket. . . "

There was a silence. Grady asked:

"Feel all right? Want me to send you to the sick bay?"

Burke's body writhed. He forced himself up on his hands and knees and then upon his feet. He stood dizzily.

"No, sir."

Grady nodded.

"O. K. Let's get on with the business."

Grady slipped his helmet over his head and made it fast. He did not so much as glance at the pallid faces of his detail. He picked up the dummy and strode with it into the fire. He disappeared. The detail stood tense, watching the spot where he had disappeared into the wall of flame.

After a moment he came striding back. He yanked his helmet off his head after a moment. Then he bawled:

"Carlson! Go get the dummy!"

Carlson's face was very white. His eyes stared at the flame. His hands lifted slowly. He secured his helmet. He walked into the fire like a man under hypnosis. There was an eternity of waiting. Then he came back—the dummy with him. He stumbled over the edge of the pool. Fell with a thud. Struggled, wriggled away from the fire. Men went forward . . . dragged him clear.

Grady put the dummy back in the fire-wrapped fuselage.

Man after man disappeared into that barrier of flame and smoke and performed the task. Grady was everywhere, silent because of his helmet, but waving his arms and driving them like a demon driving lost souls in Hades.

Two more of that detail had to be dragged from the flame and pumped full of oxygen.

Burke approached Grady.

"If you don't mind, sir," he said. "I'd like to go back—and bring out the dummy."

Grady studied his face. Burke's eyes were red and bloodshot. His face was haggard. Grady grunted.

"Go ahead," he said, almost indifferently.

Burke put on his helmet. He stood looking at the flame for one instant. Then he walked into fire. He came back in nine seconds, bearing the dummy in

his arms. He tossed it on the grass at Grady's feet.

Then it was over and the detail was two hundred yards away, with helmets off, lying on the ground. Even here the heat burned their faces. They watched the fire. There seemed a fascination about it; about the fact they had actually walked into it and lived. In their hearts they knew it must be a hallucination, that nothing could have lived in such a blaze, in spite of the white suits and the helmets. But then, each of them remembered having lifted the dummy out of the cockpit and carrying it out of the flame. They breathed deeply of the pure air.

Grady was talking to them:

"If you birds have the idea that fighting fire in one of these monkey suits is easy, change your mind before you leave here." There was a queer grimness on his face. "If fire was all we had to fight this would be a cinch. But fire is only the beginning. Listen. If that had been a real airplane in that blaze, with its tanks full of gasoline under high pressure, it would have exploded in your face. It would have blown you to hell and gone. Gasoline under pressure is worse than dynamite. You've got to work every second, knowing that hell is going to tear loose under you . . . that an explosion is going to happen any minute that will tear you apart. You've got to beat the explosion.

"You'll be called on to go into turrets with the inside filled with burning powder from a broken bag and the gas so thick you can't see. You'll be asked to go in and take a look around when no one else aboard or on the station *dares* to take that look. You'll run up against gas that will blot you out with one breath. Gas that maybe your masks won't protect you against. Heat that will melt steel. In this man's Navy nine out of ten times a fire means an explosion—either fuel, gasoline, powder, gas —something. You've got to understand that and take your chances. It just isn't a village fireman's job. . . It's a job for a guy who can skate on a plank over a volcano, and think and act and remember a million things while he's doing it. Hot Papa's are lads who live a short life and not a very damned merry one."

Grady stared at these faces in front of him. He was thinking of what the men of the Old Navy would have said to him after such a job. He was thinking of the sulphurous language and the grousing from hard bitten men who wanted to live. But these kids never said a word! That was the funny thing about them. They obeyed orders with an intelligence and a snap. They did what they were told, when they were told, and no questions asked. That fire now—that had been plenty hot! Hotter than he had expected it to be. Too much gasoline and not enough fuel-oil. Steaming, that blaze—but the kids had waded in! He looked at their faces. After a while he climbed to his feet and stripped off his asbestos suit. The detail did the same.

"Fall into ranks," he ordered. "Right face!"

Their feet pounded behind him as they marched back to the barracks.

III

AT EVENING PARADE one night sea-going orders were published. Standing in line, Joe Burke heard his name called, and then:

"Apprentice Seaman, Burke, Joseph, with the completion of present training to be rated Seaman Second Class and assigned to the Aircraft Carrier *Saratoga* for duty."

It was a stunning surprise!

A surge of heat raced over Burke. He found it difficult to stand steady, with his face frozen. There was a wild desire to toss his rifle up in the air, to break ranks . . . to yell his head off. The *Saratoga!* Jeez! He had dreamed of an assignment to a carrier. Everybody on the station wanted to go to sea on the *Saratoga* or the *Lexington.* And *he* had the assignment. He was no longer a boot!

Another series of words exploded against his consciousness.

"Apprentice Seaman Walker, William, at the termination of present training to be rated Seaman Second Class and assigned to the Fleet Oiler *Sagamore* for duty."

A loud, raucous horse laugh burst from Joe Burke's throat before he could stifle the sound. He clipped the laugh short with his teeth, but too late. The sound had startled every man on the parade ground. The executive officer lifted his head quickly. The commanding officer looked along the line angrily. The neck of Burke's company commander was suddenly swollen and brick red as he stood rigid, staring ahead. The shoulders of C. P. O. Grady suddenly hunched, and the muscles of his jaw, seen from the back of his head, tightened.

Burke stood there, his heart pounding. He was waiting for the heavens to split asunder and for lightning to crash down on his head. But the shock of it! Bill Walker, the inspired engineer going to sea on a damned tanker! Of all the hog barges in the world a lousy, smelling tanker took all the prizes for no place to be. A crawling, fat round-decked think that wallowed in the sea and spent its life filling its belly with oil and gasoline at an oil storage dock, and then laboring and grunting to the side of some battle wagon or destroyer and spewing the oil into the tanks of the ship she was refueling.

What a laugh! What a job! Why those poor clucks on board the tankers weren't even in the Navy! They were just filling station attendants!

The executive officer's voice came to an end. The Battalion marched past the commanding officer with the band leading, playing the "Thunderer," and with the rifles swinging along all at the same angle. Then they were back in line again and the band was playing the National Anthem and the flag was fluttering down from the staff to fall into the protecting arms of a member of the color guard. The sunset gun barked. Somehow, at Evening Parade a guy forgot how hard he worked or how he cussed his instructors all day.

After "Dismissed," C.P.O. Grady grabbed Burke by the arm.

"I have a good mind to wring your neck and then log you for that yap out there on the parade ground," he roared. "You don't suppose I don't know who let out that horse laugh—and why. If you weren't going away tomorrow and didn't have a good record which I'm not anxious to spoil I'd haul you up in a minute. As it is I ought to smack you one on the lug."

"I'm sorry," apologized Burke. But devils of laughter still coursed through his eyes. "I just couldn't help it. A tanker—Jeez! The guy who made up poetry about the engineering force, winding up on a tanker! It just struck me all of a sudden. I laughed before I could stop myself."

Grady's face softened.

"Aw, well, what the hell can you expect from such a Navy."

He went off growling to himself.

Later Joe Burke packed his sea bag. Still later, and rolling a little in his gait, as a true sailorman should, he crossed the street and entered the barracks which gave shelter to Bill Walker and his engineering mates. He climbed the steps to the second floor. There was a knot of gobs around Walker's cot.

Walker was packing his sea bag. The knot untied itself. The men recognized Burke.

Burke seated himself on the edge of a cot.

"Goin' someplace?" he asked with elaborate innocence. "Goin' someplace, or just practicing packing a sea bag?"

There was a silence in the barracks room. Walker said nothing. His jaws tightened. He pawed inside the bag.

"They tell me that a guy don't need Navy clothes aboard one of those oilers," Burke informed the ceiling. "They tell me that he never wears nothing but an undershirt and a pair of cut-down skivies. They tell me that nobody ever goes on liberty from an oiler because it takes two weeks to get washed up.

Walker whirled around. His face was white.

"One more crack out of you and I'm going to crown you," he said thinly.

Burke laughed. "The great engineer!" he cackled. "He goes to sea in a tanker!"

He stopped suddenly. He was staring at Walker's face. There was something in Walker's eyes—so bitter, so miserably disappointed. It stabbed Burke to the heart. He remembered how badly Walker had wanted an assignment to a carrier because the carriers were the greatest marine power plants afloat. He remembered how Bill Walker had devoured the engineering details of the *Saratoga* and *Lexington*.

He climbed to his feet. He made a final effort at sarcasm.

"Well, it just goes to show you. If you live right and pick the right rating you can't go wrong. I'll be seeing your oil barge around sometime."

Walker's fists were clenched into knots. His eyes glittered.

"You going?" he demanded. "Or am I going to give these mugs a treat and heave you out on your fat neck?"

For a moment the two of them stood there, breathing hard, glaring, on the verge of battle. Then Burke laughed shortly.

"Not tonight, big boy," he declared. "I'm going to sea tomorrow on the *Saratoga*. I've got everything I want so far out of this man's Navy excepting the satisfaction of busting you wide open for that pushing around you gave me the night we fought for the station championship. But don't get in any easy breathin' and figure it's all over. I'm going to square that if I have to chase that oil barge of yours all over the Navy. I'd do it now, only I'm not going to let the pleasure of busting you on the lug blast me out of that assignment. Hell, you can get tough. You've got nothing to lose. Even the brig would be a break for you—seeing you got nothing to look forward to but a tanker."

"You won't have to do any chasin'," snapped Walker. "You just name the date and the place and I'll do the same job all over again. Only this time, having had more practice, I'll do a more sea-going job."

Burke swaggered out of the barracks. The swagger was assumed for Walker's benefit.

The next morning a chief boatswain's mate piped them out of the training station and into launches.

Chief Petty Officer Grady said goodby to Joe Burke. He even shook hands with him.

"You'll have a pleasant cruise on the *Saratoga*, lad," he said. "She's a smart ship, and her crew is proud of her and keep right on their toes. If you don't make good aboard her, I'll break your neck."

There was something wistful in his voice as he glanced at the open sea. Something in his eyes said that he was going to miss Joe Burke and the rest of the "kids."

Burke shuffled his feet back and forth on the dock.

"I just have one regret," he told Grady. "I been hoping that I'd get a chance to take a sock at that Walker mug before I left the station. Outside of that everything is swell. Now that he's going on a damned oil scow I'll never get a crack at him."

Grady cocked an inquiring eye.

"And why not?" he demanded. "You don't suppose they keep the fleet oilers around just to impress landlubbers, do you? Hell, you'll see plenty of Walker. About every week on an average, and sometimes as often as every three days. Listen. The *Sagamore* takes care of the *Saratoga*. Sure. They're like lovers. They bump their sides together every chance they get. At sea, in the harbor, wherever the *Saratoga* goes you'll find the *Sagamore*. She'll be coming plowing through the old ocean like a submarine running awash, but you can't get away from her. For without the *Sagamore*, or an Oiler like her, the *Saratoga* couldn't keep running a week.

"And don't get the idea that Walker is going to a soft job. It takes a sailor to hold down an assignment on an Oiler. It's dangerous, dirty, slaving work. No chance for glory. Wallowing along in the sea, with the waves breaking over her round deck, sometimes with the whole of her submerged but her superstructure and stack. Having to keep dates with ships that can do thirty knots—and expected to get there—and having to get there. No parades—no salutes—no admiral's flag on a fleet oiler, but believe you me, there are plenty of sailors in the *Train*. They have to be sailors.

"Every storm, every lightning flash, every assignment, means death or worse to those boys. They live in the middle of hell fire—and they do their jobs. When they disappear they just go, and usually no one ever hears of them again—like the *Cyclops*.

"Hell! Don't worry about Walker. He'll be around."

"That makes it perfect, then," grunted Burke.

Brady snorted.

"If you don't learn to block that left lead of his with your own left, and hit him with a straight right, you better pray he stays on that oiler. After a while that left of Walker's must get hard on the eyes. . . ."

Burke grinned.

"S'long!" he called from the boat. "I'll remember what you said about blockin' that left lead."

The launch headed out into the harbor.

IV

JOE BURKE stared at the mighty sides of the *Saratoga* from the insignificance of the launch. The great carrier seemed enormous. She seemed to fill the sea and to tower above everything visible within the horizon. Her 888 feet of length made the launch seem a cockroach approaching the body of a mastodon. The men on her deck were dwarfed by her size. Because her flying deck was empty, her length and height was emphasized. Her stack lifted to a dizzy altitude and the truck above the stack seemed to pierce the very heavens.

Aboard her lived and labored thirteen hundred officers and men making up her crew, a hundred airplane pilots, and seventy two airplanes.

Joe Burke looked up at her towering sides. One little man approaching a mastodan. His eyes lifted to the blue-starred admiral's flag flying from her truck, then drifted aft to the Stars and Stripes hanging lazily from her staff. There was a tightness in his throat.

The coxswain of the launch swung her around with a Navy turn and the launch

halted abruptly at the stage. The coxswain barked:

"Snap into it now! This ain't a sightseeing tour. Shake a leg! Pick up those bags and climb!"

They climbed the ladder. Up and up. Finally they stepped aboard. The sea bags fell to the deck. They faced sharply aft and saluted her Colors. Then they saluted the officer of the Deck. A chief boatswain's mate from the station in charge of the detail lined them up for the inspection of the officer of the deck. He saluted with a snap.

"Detail for the *Saratoga*, sir," he reported. He handed over the service records of the men, and the orders assigning them to the carrier.

The officer of the deck walked along the line. He looked the detail over carefully. Finally he summoned a *Saratoga* chief boatswain.

"Take charge here, Campbell," he directed.

The *Saratoga's* boatswain took over. He barked an order at the detail.

"Pick up the bags. Right face! Forward—march!"

The detail tramped along the flight deck. The chief boatswain led them below. Burke drew a long breath. The forecastle seemed to have no limits. It stretched in unbroken space as far as the eye could see fore and aft. It was one deck below the flight deck. There seemed an endles array of cots, fixed to stanchions, and hammock hooks and mess gear and lockers. It was filled with men. The men formed lines and grinned at the detail.

"Boots!" heralded a voice. "A prize collection of boots, come out to go to sea in the *Saratoga!*"

The chief boatswain spoke rapidly, gestured, billeted the detail in three minutes.

"One bunk, one man," he snapped. "Keep your gear together where you can get at it in a minute. Keep your lockers clean and shipshape. Jump when you hear your name called. Any questions?"

There were none.

He went away. Left them standing there with helpless expressions looking around them. Wondering what to do.

Later, watch assignments were published. Later, they were split into groups and assigned to duty.

Burke was guilty of one boner. On deck he looked around him at the thousands of eye bolts fastened into the deck. There was not a 'plane in sight. He spoke timidly to an aviation machinist's mate.

"Where do we keep the planes?" he asked innocently. "I knew she was big but I didn't think they could get all the planes below at one time."

The A.M.M. looked at him and pitied his ignorance.

"You don't suppose we clutter up the decks with those things in port, do you? Hell, we say good-by to that gang fifty miles at sea. Turn 'em loose. They fly in, base on the land. We won't pick 'em up again until we're forty or fifty miles at sea."

Burke looked at the superior being.

"You're kidding," he ventured.

The A.M.M. merely looked at him witheringly and walked away.

Two days passed. Mid-afternoon of the second day a strange looking hulk approached the side of the *Saratoga*. Black smoke poured out of her funnel which was set far aft. She was half submerged in the sea. She puffed and she grunted. Joe Burke hung over the rail and looked at her. She was grimy, even over her Navy paint. Her decks were shiny with oil ooze. He made out her name. *Sagamore*. He whooped.

The *Sagamore* laid alongside the starboard of the *Saratoga*. Hoses, which became like pulsating snakes, went over her side, were taken aboard the *Sara-*

toga. Heat eddies swirled up from the metal decks of the tanker. Men off watch on the oiler swarmed up on deck. They were dirty and oil-smeared. They were sweaty and tired-looking. The *Sagamore* had been running night and day for a week, refueling the fleet in the Harbor.

Joe Burke searched the faces on the oiler. Suddenly his eyes paused in the quest. They rested on the dirtiest face and the sweatiest body on the oiler's suggestion of a deck. They brightened. No doubt about it! That was Bill Walker! In a sleeveless sweatshirt, black, gaping up at the sides of the *Saratoga*, at her cleanliness and smartness.

Burke cupped his hands around his mouth. "Ahoy, the *Sagamore!* Bill Walker."

He saw Walker's head jerk around. Burke wagged his arms.

'How's the oil business?"

Walker's answer was blistering and obscene.

After an hour the *Sagamore* took her hoses aboard and moved away. She wallowed along, puffing asthmatically. And Bill Walker had gone below to tend her engines—or to hide from the sight of the proud carrier towering above his own ill-visaged craft.

AT THE end of the third day there was a sudden stirring aboard the carrier. Men went about with happy expressions and a new elasticity of carriage. Men looked out at the horizon of the open sea. Port is swell, but sailormen are born for the sea and the *Saratoga* was going to sea, along with the *Lexington* and the fleet. The order had crackled in via radio from the commander-in-chief aboard the *Pennsylvania*.

THE *Saratoga* WILL ACCOMPANY THE FLEET TO THE DRILL GROUNDS FOR MANEUVERS AND TARGET PRACTICE.

The instant the message was received on the bridge, blinkers flashed the tidings, men wigwagged wisecracks to envious gobs who were not going. The liberty parties became a thing of the past. The decks hummed with activity. In the turrets, anxious gunnery officers drove gun crews in practice loadings and firings. Men went into the turrets dry and laughing. They came out with strained faces and taut nerves dripping with sweat.

The five inch anti-aircraft rifles swung out over the sides. Crews behind gun shields worked stripped to the waist. Life aboard the carrier became intense and incisively efficient.

Then at dawn on the fourth morning of Joe Burke's life aboard the carrier, her capstan heaved the anchor up. The heavy links clanked up through the hawse pipes. A crew armed with a fire hose squatted over the chain and washed it thoroughly as it came aboard. Before her hooks were snug in the hawse-pipes, the *Saratoga* was swinging in a graceful arc, pointing her nose to the sea . . . toward the misty horizon of the west.

The breeze blew over her deck as she picked up way. She moved with the dainty ease of a thoroughbred racehorse mincing a way to the post. Around her, the other elements of the fleet were steaming. The squat, dangerous looking battleships headed by the *Pennsylvania* and the *California*. A line of them, each treading in the wake of the ship next in line. Fighting tops outlined starkly against the blue sky.

The land receded, became a purple mist to the east. The tops of the waves became crested with white. Spume and spray whipped from the waves, became a salt mist and swirled about the moving steel fortresses. The battle wagons stuck noses down into the swells and plunged ahead. The cruisers—the sharp-prowed ten-thousand-ton "treaty" cruisers—

parted the water with knife like prows, settled down to the business of running, and rolling like destroyers, led the van of the armada.

Great ships and small. The flotilla leaders with the destroyers racing along with them. The ominous, rounded backs of the submarines.

But the greatest of all, and most beautiful and most swift and most regal, the two carriers, the *Lexington* and the *Saratoga*. Each of them running with empty flight decks.

Joe Burke wandered about like a lost soul. Of all the men aboard he alone seemed to have nothing to do. He spent his hours trying to keep from under the feet of the men who were working with swift, trained certainty. Men going about the thousand tasks necessary to the operation of the *Saratoga*. They swarmed about him, glared at him, elbowed him, moved him from place to place. Petty officers barked at him peevishly.

"Hey, you! Hey, goldbrick! Move to hell out of there! What are you, a congressman in disguise?"

Finally he found a place in the nettings and watched the work going on about him. The entire detail which had arrived aboard with him were assigned to watches. But no one had bothered with him. He had nothing to do. He ventured to ask the chief boatswain's mate about the oversight. The chief boatswain's mate had been very busy.

"Work—for you? I don't know anything about you, big boy. Maybe they're saving you for the Big Game. Just stick around and look willing and somebody is sure to put a kiyi or something in your hands."

Then, suddenly the annunciator blared his name. It was funny, standing there and listening to his name being shouted along the deck by a metallic voice. First the shrilling of a boatswain's whistle for attention, then the voice:

"Burke, seaman second class, report to the flight officer! Burke, seaman second class, report to the flight officer!"

He stood in the nettings, hypnotized by the sound.

A hand grabbed at his arm. The eyes of the boatswain's mate glared at him. "Say!" demanded the boatswain's mate. "Ain't your name Burke?"

"Yeah," admitted Burke.

"Well, what the hell do you suppose they're paging you for—practice? You better lay aft and see what's bothering the flight officer. That Peters is a guy that when he commands 'Eyes right!' he wants to hear the eyeballs click."

The flight officer was in the ready room. He was pacing up and down. Now and then his eyes went to the "ouija board" on one wall of the ready room. It was covered with a multitude of scale outlines of all the planes berthed aboard the carrier. He was worried-looking. He glanced up as Burke came to attention and saluted. He glanced at a paper in his hand.

"Your name Burke?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"You graduated from the Hot Papa course at the training station?"

"Yes, sir."

"You know that job perfectly?"

"Yes, sir."

Lieutenant-Commander Peters, the flight officer aboard the *Saratoga*, studied the young face in front of him. His eyes had a probing quality.

"You're a little young for such an important job," he commented. He read from the service record in his hand. "You have a splendid comment on your record from your instructor at the Hot Papa school," he admitted. "I know Grady. When he writes a fitness report for a man he doesn't romance."

There was no reply from Burke.

"You understand the technique of airplane rescue work under fire conditions?"

"Yes, sir."

"Turret rescue work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, I'm going to assign you to that job aboard. We haven't had a great deal of experience in the business. We have outlined a course of training for Hot Papas, but in an emergency, excepting for that training, the whole situation centers upon the courage, thinking ability and resourcefulness of Hot Papa himself. He's a very important member of the crew. The lives of his shipmates, of flying officers, of all the airplanes and even of the ship itself is in his hands, once the emergency for which he had been trained occurs.

"There are only two of you aboard. You are subject to twenty-four hour duty. You are subject to call at any minute. When planes are operating from the carrier, or re-fueling operations are being carried on, you are on continuous duty. One of you must be aboard the carrier at all times."

There was a moment's silence. Peters' eyes were fixed on the lad's face.

"Think you'd like that kind of an assignment?"

Burke's voice was tense. "Yes, sir!"

"Good. Take this to the chief boatswain." The flight officer scribbled words on a leaf from a memorandum pad and signed them. Then he turned back to his precious "ouija board."

Three minutes later, Burke, a trifle breathless, was standing in front of the chief boatswain. The chief was reading the assignment order making Joseph Burke a Hot Papa aboard the carrier. The chief grunted, looked at Burke searchingly and led him to the storeroom.

"Outfit Burke here with a Hot Papa suit," he ordered.

The equipment came over the counter. The asbestos garments, the heavy gauntlets, the awkward looking shoes, and the helmet. After that the chief boatswain conducted Hot Papa Burke to his station on the flight deck.

"This is your station. You stay here, understand? You never leave it. During landings and take-offs, refueling—everything in which aircraft or gas and oil figure—you stand here. Ready to do your stuff. Got it?"

Burke nodded.

"You'll have a part in all fire drills and turret rescue drills. You'll drill with the firemen, but you'll have your own job to do. That's all. You go on watch the minute we get orders to take the ships aboard."

Burke stood for a long moment, after the chief boatswain had departed, his weird uniform in his hands. His heart was hammering against his ribs. He was a Hot Papa! He was important. Only two of him on the ship! Not like those other guys that ran in droves—only two Hot Papas. Only two guys fit to be trusted with the handling of big emergencies.

If that mug Bill Walker in his crummy oil barge could get a load of this!

V

THE *Saratoga* made rendezvous with her brood at a longitude and latitude approximately seventy miles off the coast. Sunshine flooded the space between heaven and earth. High up, tendril-like snatches of alta strata clung to the blue of the sky. As far as the eye could see within the horizon there was the restless, lazily rolling sea, with the silhouettes of the battle fleet standing out like toy warships in a vast blue mirror. The battleships were so low on the water that the mild waves laved over them; came aboard with a swirling and swishing of salt water.

Out of the empty blue overhead came the whining drone of a host of airplane

motors. A sound which bored down out of space and sent little shivers along the spine. Heads turned upward, searched for the black dots in the sky. And then, with a breath taking speed and precision, the first of the fighter triads swooped down upon the carrier.

They came down in threes, diving with a blinding speed, noses pointed for the flying deck, wings and fuselages distorted with the velocity of the plunge. The motors revved up to a point of madness. It seemed that nothing could withstand the terrible strain of such speed, of such power; that the motors would explode into fragments through the very viciousness of lashing propellers and concentrated fury.

The sun caught up the markings on the ships. Touched the yellows and greens of the squadron insignias, illuminated identifying numerals and the Navy Air markings on wings and rudder.

Down, out of the sun, like striking eagles, until it seemed they would crash headlong into the carrier, and then, with a flirt of the tail, zooming upward dizzily, the motors shrieking in fierce ecstasy. Up, at a thousand feet an instant. Banking with wings cocked vertically; swinging around in tight formation. And with more and more triads pouring into visibility from the east.

All of the fighting units. The single seaters first. Then the two-seater Grummans. Then the bombers, sinister, big winged creatures of the upper air. Until they were all there, hanging above the carrier. The sky was filled with planes.

At the first sound of the motors a trumpet had blared out of the annunciators aboard the *Saratoga*. A strident, electric call: "Flight Quarters!" Men had tumbled on deck. Men, running to stations. Taxi crews, firemen, repairmen, the arrestor-gear crew. Crew chiefs in white. The taxi crew in yellow helmets. The firemen in red helmets. The repairmen in blue helmets. The arrestor gear crew in green. A weaving, bobbing, shifting mass of color. Each crew garbed in a different color so that they might be instantly recognized in the mêlée of action attending carrier flight operations. Men tumbled into the nettings and stood by, ready to take roles in the drama and spectacle. The arrestor gear crew went into the nettings opposite the landing space.

The barrier went up. The landing signal flew from the *Saratoga*. The first triad of fighters circled the carrier. The carrier had thrust her nose into the wind. She had picked up to twenty knots. There was a five knot breeze. All landings and take-offs were made at a calculated speed of twenty-five knots. The first single-seater whipped out of the circle over the carrier's stern. The motor in its nose was suddenly silent. It glided in, aiming at a space two hundred feet long and ninety feet wide. The arrestor gear was standing upright in arresting position. The Boeing touched its wheels to the deck. It rolled forward twenty-five feet. The plane caught the arrestor gear. Even as it touched the deck the second ship came out of the landing circle, leveled off, pointed for the landing space.

The arrestor gear crew plunged headlong under the belly of the ship on deck, threw off the arresting apparatus; dived back into the nettings. A taxi crew moving with unbelievable speed grabbed the wings of the Boeing, guided it along the deck. The pilot opened the throttle again. The barrier, separating the landing space from the remainder of the flying deck, fell flat. The Boeing, taxiing so rapidly that the taxi crew moved at a dead run, flashed up to the very nose of the carrier, took its position on deck . . . was lashed fast by wires to the eye bolts in the deck.

The barrier went up. The second plane touched the deck. The arrestor gear crew threw themselves headlong again. The entire operation was repeated. Without a hitch, without a break in the smooth routine of the spectacle. A ship touching the deck every nineteen seconds, and being whisked away to make room for the next ship to land. Motion so rapid on the part of the landing crew that individuals could not be followed.

No football team in the world ever ran its plays with the precision and exactitude of the teams working on the *Saratoga's* deck. Lives, property, safety, depended upon the completion of each assignment and upon the unfailing team work of the whole.

In the air, overhead, the whining drone of motors went on and on, endlessly, tirelessly.

Joe Burke, swathed in his Hot Papa outfit, stood starkly tense at a point near the island—the point where the carrier's superstructure abutted into the flying deck. There was a chemical fire extinguisher at his feet. His helmet was on his head. His hands were covered with gauntlets. He was breathing hard through the rubber mouthpiece in his mouth. His eyes were staring out of the windows of his helmet. His body felt tight as a drum.

Ship afted ship dropped on the deck, passed him in a flurry of motion. Each ship was an element of danger. Any one of those ships might meet disaster. The emergency for which he had been trained might take place within any given instant. The exhaust valves in his helmet clicked loudly.

His pulses were racing. This was the moment! The *Saratoga's* brood coming aboard. Wings, diving down on the carrier. The most beautiful sight in the world—and he was a part of it! An important part. He was Hot Papa. Those boys in those ships looked at him and felt safer. They depended upon him. Trusted him.

And then, the flying deck was crammed with planes. The big bombers came aboard. Almost before they touched the deck, landing crews swarmed down upon each of them and had ripped wing hinge pin locks open, set up the jury struts, and folded back the great wings. The ships, large and small, were crowded together on the deck. So close that men were forced to squirm and twist a way between them. The entire flight deck, which less than an hour before had seemed so vast, so tremendous, now was choked with planes, and the miracle of it all was that so many ships could be berthed on the two and one-half acres of teakwood surface.

The pilots swarmed into the ready room, and then went below to quarters.

Lieutenant Commander Peters stood at the side of the island. It seemed to Burke that his face had lost the strain and worry, now that the planes were safely aboard. The flight officer watched the refueling and servicing operations. Men darted between the ships, carrying fuel hoses; twisted the caps off gas tanks, thrust the nozzles of the hoses into the tanks. There was the smell of raw gasoline. It was everywhere. Fumes eddied and twisted in the space directly above the ships.

Mechanics removed motor cowlings from the planes and examined motors. Mechanics examined oil tanks and gas tanks, and the lines which ran from them to the motors. Riggers went over struts and fittings and surfacings. It was all routine.

It was like a glorified, super-efficient mad-house.

And all the while the *Saratoga* cut her way through the sea, unruffled and untroubled. The men on her deck hardly noticed the fact that she moved or that the sea flowed past her sleek sides. They were absorbed in duties.

Then it was over. Crew after crew finished with the work and disappeared.

A C. P. O. grinned at Burke and gestured to him to remove his helmet. "O. K., Hot Papa," he said, when the hel-

met was off Burke's head, "you can take off the disguise now — we know you. Cripes! Another minute an' you'll explode!"

Burke's face was brick red. The blood was pounding in his ears. His eyes seemed on the point of bursting. His body dripped sweat. He took a deep breath of the cool, sweet sea-air.

"It's hot as hell inside this thing," he told the C. P. O. He seemed reluctant to leave his station.

"Wait until it really gets hot for you," promised the petty officer. "You'll think standing by is just a pleasant pastime."

The flight officer glanced at Burke.

"Hot, Burke?" he inquired.

Burke lied manfully.

"No, sir. Just a little warm in the sun."

Commander Peters grinned. His eyes caught the sweat pouring from Burke's head and neck.

"You'll get used to it," he said reassuringly. "Frankly, a get-up like that would not make a hit with me—with the thermometer at 90 degrees."

"I don't mind it, sir," assured Burke happily. He continued to stand there, looking at the planes crowding the carrier's deck. He seemed let down a little. There had been nothing for him to do. Nothing but stand in one place, in the midst of that boiling activity. Not so much as a chance to have a hand in the landing operation. Sweltering in an asbestos suit—watching—waiting.

If there had been a fire—just a little fire—or an accident—so that he could have gone charging in with his brand new outfit. If he had a chance to show the boys something about a first class Hot Papa. The tension of the landing operation was still taut within his body. His head was still whirling from the multitude of planes which had milled about him.

He went below. He was too new to the carrier to understand there were no accidents because every man aboard had been trained to do one job perfectly, exactly as he had been trained. It was hard—to do nothing.

VI

LIEUTENANT MASON, the *Saratoga's* athletic officer, grunted and backed away. He covered his body and head with his hands and arms and felt the zip and thud of the punches bouncing off his arms and body. The ropes struck him across the back. He felt the push of Joe Burke's body against him and the setting of Burke's muscles for a fresh onslaught. He laughed and pushed Burke away with his hands.

"That's enough, Joe," he declared. "I'd rather mix it with a gorilla. You're winging punches better than ever. You're in swell shape."

Burke stepped back. He was grinning. He saw that Lieutenant Mason's nose was slightly bloody and that a welt was rising under the lieutenant's eye.

Mason turned to C. P. O. Kelvin, the trainer of the *Saratoga's* boxing team.

"What do you think of him, Kelvin?" he demanded.

"He's ready," grunted Kelvin. "If he only holds that hot head of his, and fights his fight, he's as good as fleet champion this minute. Look at him. Hardly breathing after working fifteen hard rounds. He went ten rounds with the boys here, before you took him on, and he's worked on the bags. I've had him runnin' his legs off. He does five miles twice a day. I'm lettin' him ease up now; I don't want him too fine. He weighs one-forty one stripped."

The athletic officer's face revealed an inward satisfaction. Having a champion, the one hundred forty pound champion of the fleet, aboard the *Saratoga* would be a sense of satisfaction. He had watched Burke throughout the six months Joe Burke had been aboard the carrier. He knew men. He knew that Burke was a fighter.

He glanced at Burke out of the cor-

ner of his eye as Kelvin untied his gloves from his hands.

"You know Walker won his eliminations? You have to beat him for the Championship."

Burke's voice was dry. "Yeah?" he asked with assumed indifference. "I heard he was going like a house afire. Well, I'd rather fight him than anybody else. I've been getting ready for six months."

"You fought him once before, didn't you?"

"Sure, at the station. He won the station championship from me. He belted me out in the second round."

"Lucky punch!" scoffed Kelvin.

Burke's eyes glittered.

"Lucky punch, hell!" he snapped. "He hit me on the jaw and I forgot to duck. Before that he punched me dizzy while I was trying to smack him down. Anybody his own weight Walker hits on the jaw with a good solid punch is going to hear the canaries chirping. Nobody can alibi his Sunday wallop."

Lieutenant Mason smiled. He smacked Burke on the shoulder. "That's sense," he nodded. "If he's good, admit it."

"He's plenty good," assured Burke. "If he comes in right, you'll see a fight."

There was a little pause. Mason studied Burke's face.

"How come, Joe?" he asked. Naturally, I've heard things. This grudge between you and Bill Walker?"

Burke's face was set.

"He ran out on me," he told the lieutenant. "We came into the service together and we're not in two days before he goes bugs on engineering and is trying to talk me into asking for an assignment as a grease monkey. He figures he can get ahead faster in the engine room. And I figure to show him he's wrong."

For one instant Burke lifted his head proudly. "Well, I guess I won. I'm a Hot Papa. He's still just a grease monkey on a sea-going oil station."

Mason shook his head.

"No, he isn't," he said quietly. "I was talking about Walker with the *Sagamore's* engineering officer two days ago. He tells me that Walker is a damned good man. He just about runs the *Sagamore's* engine room on his watch, and his Chief is spending plenty of time teaching him engineering. Walker hit it lucky. Got on a ship with a small engine room force and a good officer who is interested in him. Bill Walker is going to run somebody's engine room one of these days."

Burke's jaw tightened.

"Well, it won't save him from getting his block knocked off day after tomorrow. No damned grease monkey from an oiler is going to take a championship away from the *Saratoga*."

Kelvin shuffled his feet.

"The boys on the carrier are in hock on Burke," he explained to the athletic officer. "They're sure hopin' that nothin' happens to that grudge before the fight comes off. If Burke here forgets to duck this time there'll be crepe run up on the truck of this man's part of the Navy, and one thousand men will be dead broke for three months."

"I'm not forgettin' to duck," growled Burke. "And I didn't ask anybody to bet on me."

"You better run around the deck a couple of laps to loosen up," ordered Kelvin. "Take it easy. And don't chill off."

Lieutenant Mason watched Burke trot off. There was a little smile at the corners of his mouth.

"Er—Kelvin," he said musingly, "if you should happen to run across anyone who fancies Walker's chances to beat Joe Burke, you might let me know. I wouldn't mind a little bet myself."

Kelvin grinned. "I'll sure look around, sir. There's bound to be plenty of Walker money ashore, in the Train."

VII

THE *Saratoga* rode easily at anchor outside the harbor. Because of her great bulk and draft she was stationed offshore when the fleet was in San Diego harbor. The officer of the deck looked aloft. Black nimbus whipped across the face of the sun. The carrier's grayness seemed brighter in the gathering blackness. The wind whipped around the island, and moaned as it struck her rigging. He shifted his telescope under his left arm.

"Orderly!"

A seaman saluted smartly.

"Go below and bring me my raincoat —and get your own."

The orderly came back with the raincoats.

"Thunderstorm," informed the officer of the deck shortly. "It'll break in a little while. We've been in for it for the past two days. We're going to get it—good."

The orderly nodded and retired to the lee of the island.

Thunder rumbled from the black sky. The ceiling shut down to within five hundred feet of the carrier's deck. There was a sudden deluge of rain. Through the rain vivid streaks of lightning crackled dangerously. It seemed concentrated, vicious. The heavens bombarded the sea.

A wallowing gray shape lurched toward the *Saratoga*. The officer of the deck peered from under the visor of his cap. His mouth moved disgustedly.

"The *Sagamore,*" he told himself. "What the hell! You might know they'd pick out a spot like this. Oh, hell!"

The annunciator barked an order.

"Stand by to receive lines and hose."

Men came tumbling up from below. The rain and wind snatched at them. They skidded along the decks, made for the side of the carrier.

The *Sagamore* swung slowly to starboard. She edged in close to the side of the *Saratoga*. She seemed diffident about the entire operation. The rain lashed at her low decks. The white capped waves broke over her bow, buried her in a swirling of brine. Bells rang in her engine room. A heaving line coiled and writhed from the carrier. Deft hands on the treacherous deck of the oiler caught it. A hawser went overboard from the carrier with a splash. It was dragged through the water and made fast aboard the *Sagamore*. Other hawsers joined the carrier to the oiler.

The fuel hoses were broken out, came aboard the *Saratoga*.

Hot Papa Burke grumbled in his asbestos outfit. There was no shelter for him from the fury of the storm. He had to stand and take it. The rain snarled about him, ran in rivulets from his costume. He could see the hoses from the *Sagamore* pulsing under the urge of the fuel pumps.

The core of the storm seemed hanging over the carrier. The lightning ripped jagged incisions in the black belly of the low hanging clouds. The interval between the flashes and the thunder grew shorter. The rain threw a gray curtain of invisibility over everything. Except for a vague outline, it completely concealed the *Sagamore,* and she was not more than twenty feet from the *Saratoga's* side and rolling like a blown whale.

Each time the lightning flashed it lit the decks of the carrier for a brief instant. Then the gray-blackness rushed back.

There was a sudden terrific crash and the smell of ozone—of electricity burning air. The deck under Burke's feet trembled violently. The shock stunned him for an instant. Then he heard voices yelling—saw men running—saw the red glare of fire outline the starboard rail of the carrier. He scrambled to his feet, weighed down by the Hot Papa outfit. The piercing shriek of the *Saratoga's* alarm siren tore at his ear drums.

At the rail he saw men in the sea,

being tossed about, their heads revealed in the red glare. The glare was shooting out of the belly of the oiler. A column of sullen flame burned fiercely, from a spot well forward on her deck.

A jagged something tore at his belly. The *Sagamore* had been struck by lightning! That damned sea-going whale with her belly full of oil and gasoline! He saw some of her crew diving overboard. There were others of her crew lying inertly upon her deck, in instant danger of being washed overboard or burned. But he was thinking of the *Saratoga.* Of that blazing torch lying beside the carrier. He found himself out over space, clinging to a hawser, sliding down the big manila rope, out over the sea—toward the deck of the *Sagamore.*

Crazy thoughts were churning in his head. Somebody had to get that bonfire away from the side of the *Saratoga.* Somebody had to cut those hoses loaded with fuel under pressure before the fire was pumped through them into the belly of the carrier. His feet struck solid surface. He balanced his body until he could stand upright. Flame swept around him. It was curling forward, toward the *Sagamore's* elevated bridge.

There was a fire ax in its wall bracket. He snatched at it. He waddled to the oiler's rail. He hacked at the hawser securing the tanker to the carrier. He stumbled over an oil line. He cut it with one smash of the ax blade. Black oil spouted from the severed hose, drenched him to the waist. The hose, still under pressure, writhed like a snake, whipped about, spurted oil like a geyser. He cut a second oil line and a third.

The fire roared. The heat was blistering the decks. It was blistering the side of the carrier. He cut the stern line. The tanker was free. He waved his arms madly at the tanker's bridge. Why didn't they kick her clear? Why were they letting her drift closer to the side of the carrier? Panic galloped through his soul. The sea was pounding the oiler—driving her nearer and nearer the *Saratoga.*

He was breathing in gasps from his exertions within the Hot Papa outfit. It seemed that his legs were imprisoned within ton weights. He climbed the ladder to the bridge. He stumbled over something—a body—on the floor. Under his feet a second body—a third. No wonder the officers on the oiler's bridge had not swung her clear. That lightning had wiped out her bridge force. He turned his head from side to side. He saw that her wheel kicked back and forth inertly.

He grabbed at the spokes. With one hand he pushed the engine room telegraph down all the way—ordering full speed ahead. He swung the wheel hard over. He was grinding his teeth. Jeez! Those guys swarming up from below and diving into the sea! They must have been from the *Sagamore's* engine room.

She didn't carry a deck force to amount to anything. They had been shocked by the lightning bolt, had heard the explosion, felt the heat of the fire. They had rushed on deck to escape being trapped in a steel coffin. There was nobody left below to handle her engines!

With the engine room telegraph standing on full ahead—nothing happened!

He had to be sure. He had to have her screws turning over. He had to get her away from the *Saratoga.* A grating bump caused the tanker to shudder from stem to stern. She was dead up against the carrier.

He snatched at the helmet on his head. He forgot that if a man breathed flame he was as good as dead. His helmet was his greatest protection . . . but he had to know whether anyone remained in the oiler's engine room. He took a last suck at his breather tube as the helmet came off. The heat pricked at his face. He put his mouth close to the engine room speaking tube. He shouted:

"In the engine room! Hey! In the engine room!"

He jumped as if stung. A voice

snapped at him from out of the mouth of the speaking tube. The voice said:

"Aye, aye, sir!"

It was a faint voice. It came from the depths of the tube.

A hand clutched Burke's heart. That voice! No other voice in the world like that. Bill Walker's voice! Down there in the burning bowels of that tanker! In the middle of a thousand tons of gasoline and oil with the fire roaring over his head. Down there—standing by his lousy engines.

He shouted into the tube.

"For Christ's sake, give her everything she's got!"

Walker's voice floated back.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir. Only one man down here fit for duty. I've opened her wide."

Suddenly the *Sagamore* moved. The pulse of life trembled through her length. Her propeller churned. She moved away, put open water between the *Saratoga* and her flaming hull.

Burke clung to the wheel with one hand and put the helmet on his scorched head. He was purple from holding his breath. His eyes were starting out of his head. He took one great gulping breath at the rubber mouthpiece. He lifted the helmet a second time. The heat was fiercer. He shouted into the speaking tube.

"She's clear!" he shrieked. "Leave her open wide. Make a break for the deck. Come on! She's burning like hell! You've got one chance—"

There was no answer. Merely the continuing thump of the oiler's engines.

Burke coughed and gasped. It seemed he would cough up the lining of his lungs. He battened down his helmet.

A boat rounded the stern of the *Saratoga*. After a moment a second boat appeared. The crew of the first boat picked up the men floundering in the black water. The second boat made for the tanker.

There was a delirium of action on the carrier. Bugles sounded strident summons to fire quarters. Gongs rang. A siren screeched. Fire fighting equipment was broken out.

There was three hundred yards of open water between the *Sagamore* and the *Saratoga* now. The heat on the oiler was terrific. The bridge was in the center of a red curtain of flame. Great gouts of burning oil coiled up and licked at the bridge windows. The windows cracked. The rain splashed in, hissed, boiled.

Joe Burke held onto her wheel and headed her for the open sea. He was thinking of Bill Walker down there with red hot metal around him. Gasoline and oil boiling inside the tanker, in her dozen compartments. He cursed savagely and looked around. He snatched a length of signal halyard out of its place and threw a hitch around the binnacle and the wheel, lashing the wheel tight. His eye caught a carefully lettered sign overhead: "Emergency Fire Extinguisher." He pulled the lever all the way down. There was a hissing sound and a shower of chemicals squirted from pipes overhead. He carried the bodies of the men on the *Sagamore's* bridge down to the deck and placed them out of reach of the flames.

He bounced up and down the bridge ladder in his heavy shoes. The oiler's deck, forward, was a cherry red. Flame roared up between the bridge and head.

A voice hailed him from the *Saratoga's* boat. "Jump! We'll pick you up! Damn it, JUMP!"

He didn't even turn his head. He couldn't hear the voice.

He was pounding down a companionway. He didn't know his way about on this tub but the engine room should be down here somewhere. He bumped against hot metal plates. Smoke was pouring out of tight crevices between rivets. It was so hot below decks the heat seemed to push against his chest.

He pounded down the ladder from the last grating. He saw a staggering figure standing in front of an array of

wheels, valves and other gadgets. The figure was swaying on its feet. The figure was Bill Walker, engineering right up to the last go-down. Walker's body was running with sweat. The walls of the engine room were growing red hot. The smoke seeped in. Chemicals were spouting out of pipes. Walker was coughing, strangling.

Burke was at his side. He grabbed him by the arm. There was a queer light in Walker's eyes. He fought with the white garbed Hot Papa—struck at him—pushed him away—clung to the throttle.

Burke drew back his gauntleted hand. It crashed against Walker's jaw. Walker went down. Burke picked him up. He stumbled over something on the floor plates. It was the *Sagamore's* engineering officer. He grabbed him around the body and shifted the weight until he had the officer under one arm. He dragged the two of them toward the ladder. He fought the dead weight of them as he dragged them upward. Somehow he struggled out on deck. The breather pipe in his helmet was not feeding him sufficient oxygen for the labor. His lungs were aflame.

Hands snatched at him, wrestled with him. He fought like a demon for the possession of Bill Walker's body, until he discovered that the hands belonged to men from the *Saratoga*. Then he surrendered his burden. He lurched toward the engine room ladder a second time. He forgot that the tanker might explode any instant. He ignored gestured commands from an officer. He plunged below decks—back to the engine room. He climbed back up—staggering through empty alleyways and compartments. He found a man crumpled into a shapeless heap at the foot of a hatch. He dragged him on deck.

Someone pounced on him from behind, pinioned his arms, tripped him, sat on the small of his back. Hands literally tossed him into space where other hands grabbed at him. He found himself in the bottom of the *Saratoga's* boat. There were unconscious figures about him, smoke blackened, burned.

The boat raced away from the burning ship. Her paint was blistered. The heat pursued them.

It seemed to Joe Burke that he went to sleep.

VIII

WHEN Hot Papa Burke awoke he was in bed. There was a queer smell about this forecastle. He sniffed. What the hell? A voice said: "Lay quiet, buddy. Everything is going to be all right." He looked for the owner of the voice. A white uniform stood over him.

"What the hell?" he demanded of the white uniform. His voice seemed to roar in his ears.

"You're on the *Reliøf*, buddy," informed the voice, "and everything is under control."

A sudden dead weight dragged at Burke's stomach.

"How about Bill Walker?" he croaked. He half raised himself on his elbow and stared about him. "Where's Bill? Damn it, where's Bill Walker?"

"If that mug in the next cot is Bill Walker, you can turn your head and see him!" There was a grin on the hospital orderly's face.

Burke took a deep breath. He stared. He saw something with the hair singed from its head and swathed in bandages.

"H'ya, fella," said a mouth framed by bandages. The voice was Bill Walker's.

Burke fell back against his pillow. He closed his eyes for a moment. His breathing became shallow. He blinked hard once or twice.

"You damn fool," he said huskily.

There was a little silence. The bay was filled with bandaged men. Some of them were grinning.

Walker's voice sounded muffled from behind his bandages.

"I must have been a little batty . . . down there with that fire," he confessed. "It was hot as hell. I was waiting for her to blow to hell and gone. Then I saw you in that monkey suit . . . you scared hell out of me . . . all white like a damned ghost, comin' through the smoke. That took a lot of guts, Joe. Goin' down her belly . . . with her burning. I heard a couple of stories . . . about your end of that mess . . . I'd like to say thanks . . . even if it don't mean anything after a stunt like that. . . ."

Joe Burke's mouth moved in a shaky grin. He tried to keep his voice a growl.

"Thanks, hell!" he grunted. "You don't suppose I was going to let you fry down there . . . do you . . . with the Fleet Championships comin' off . . . and me all set to knock you loose from your neck? Listen . . . I been training for six months . . . you suppose I'm going to work like hell like that . . . for nuthin'?"

Bill Walker turned his face away. He was grinning . . . a foolish grin . . . like the grins of the other men in the bay.

There was another little silence. Burke's voice growled again.

"Hey! Why don't you join the Navy and get transferred to a real ship? You ought to see *our* engines. Now there's a set of engines a guy could get his teeth into. . . ."

A C. P. O.'s voice sounded from the end of the bay. "Pipe down, you guys. This is a hospital."

"Aw, horsecollar, sailor," complained Burke. "What kind of a hog barge is this? Can't a guy talk to his friends?"

TRIAL FOR MURDER AMAZES ESKIMOS

ANIURAK looked with longing upon the wife of Ahigiak. He went further and pressed unwelcome attentions. They were friends and hunting companions, Aniurak and Ahigiak, but Ahigiak killed him. There was a momentary ripple in the Eskimo village, then life went on. Aniurak had erred and he was dead. It was done. This was in 1931.

The story spread idly in the scarce contacts with Eskimos from other villages and with white trappers and fur-buyers. It trickled over the wilderness of the Far North and came at length to the all-hearing ear of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The long arm reached out over the frozen waste.

A year later a trooper mushed into the village after traveling hundreds of miles. The villagers welcomed him but could not understand his interest in the almost forgotten killing. It was done. What more?

The nearest settlement is Coppermine, Northwest Territories, but it has no jail. The nearest jail is a couple of hundred miles away. The trooper committed Ahigiak to the custody of the elders of the village and went about his far-flung business until such time as a court should journey into this region.

In the summer of 1934 the wheels of justice made their final turn. Magistrate J. M. Douglas flew to Coppermine and visited the Eskimo village, scene of the killing. The Eskimos thought the judicial party had come after caribou or to buy furs!

The trial took place in Coppermine. Ahigiak and his wife dressed in their best and were photographed with the judge and others of the court. Their fellow villagers and other Eskimos gathered outside and stared wonderingly. It was all too incomprehensible when Ahigiak was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. They wagged their heads and went home marvelling anew at the strangeness of the white man's law—and at the Redcoats who come over such vast distances and endure such hardships to administer their justice.—Foster Drake.

THE SORRY JEST

By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

THE ivory cubes clicked their devil's dance across the board, in and out amongst the wine-lees and fragments of tobacco. Loungers and tapboys edged closer to watch the play, eyeing greedily the heap of yellow coins which clinked musically when the table was jarred. Three of the players were as tense as the bystanders. The fourth, a lean, tall, black-browed stranger in his early twenties, wearing a coat of red velvet the least bit shoddy in comparison with the ruffles which cascaded over his buff vest, sat back in his chair, puffing languidly at a thin cigarro of Verena leaves. His veiled glance slipped lightly from one to another of his companions.

"Damme, 'tis the worst run o' luck I ha' had since John Churchill rooked me as a lad," growled Bully Jenkins, of Hawke's Regiment of foot, his bulbous nose flaring as red as his uniform jacket as he tossed a peso d'oro into the heap. Next to him Sir Bellamy Temple caught up the dice-box eagerly. A thin, foppish fellow, Sir Bellamy, in from his plantation at the Twenty Mile Savannah for whatever dissipation Port Royal afforded. He rattled the dice, and cast, then shook his long curls petulantly.

"A pox on this game," he drawled. "'Tis your hazard, Pellitt. Come," he urged, as the third player breathed on the cubes, "show us a picaroon's luck."

"That will I," quoth Jack Pellitt, master of the snow, *Ladye Fayre*. There was a reckless grin on his handsome face, but the black-browed stranger at the table did not miss the tiny pulse twitching at his temple. "Here's an onza says—" He broke off, dice in hand, and

turned his eyes, so cynical and tired within their frames of crowsfeet, toward the rear of the taproom whence a tall old man had started to limp slowly betwixt the tables. Pellitt rose quickly— "Your pardon, gentles"— and went to meet the newcomer, still cuddling the dice in his limber fingers.

They drew aside, an odd couple: the old man stooping from his great height, his highbeaked features courteously aloof, his costume rich, but plain; Pellitt, straddle-legged, hand on rapier, head poised with viperish alertness, brilliant as a cockatoo in jewelled yellow feather, green coat and sky blue breeches.

The stranger with the cigarro studied them idly, sensing a conflict as Pellitt's jaw tightened and the old man's aloofness became more marked.

"Who is it?" he asked of his neighbors.

Sir Bellamy laughed shrilly. "I' faith, Mr. Paradene, 'tis to be seen you are not long overseas," he cried. "That's Mendoza, the Spanish merchant, who disposes of their loot for the picaroons."

"Say, rather, the Spanish Jew," corrected Bully Jenkins, pulling at his winejack. "And I'm a fool if he's not turning back whatever 'tis Jack will have o' him. A stiff-necked rogue."

"I'd like fine to have the plucking of him," giggled Sir Bellamy. "They say he is the richest man in Jamaica. And he lives like a hermit by his lone!"

The man who was called Paradene found his interest stimulated in the debate, which, obviously, was not going as Pellitt wished. The bearded features of the Jew were as calm as ever, but the picaroon's sword-hand was raised in a gesture of both threat and appeal; a tag-end of speech sawed through the smoky air— "But why, I ask ye, why? Ha' not others—"

And presently Mendoza terminated the argument with a brief bow, and limped to the street, nodding to several who spoke him in passage. Pellitt strode back to the table, teeth clinched under his fair mustache, and flung himself into his seat— "The fires of hell for him," he muttered.

"What's wrong, Jack?" queried Sir Bellamy.

"He'll not buy of me—and as rich a cargo as I ever fetched in."

Jenkins chuckled slyly. "No manifests, eh?"

Pellitt flushed angrily. "Who'd look for manifests for goods from a Portingal prize that had filched 'em from one of ours?" he countered.

The soldier wagged his head wisely— "So that's it! Mendoza's grown touchy, eh? A mighty virtuous fellow."

"I'll virtue him," snarled the picaroon. "He grows sour with his richness. Well, 'tis to be seen to if a lousy Spaniard, Jew or no Jew, can ruffle it over Englishmen!"

Paradene removed the cigarro from his lips— "You ha' yet to cast, Captain Pellitt," he said mildly.

Pellitt started. "So y' have a tongue in your head, sir," he answered, half-sneeringly. "Well, this is not my day o' luck, God wot, but here's for you." He boxed the dice and rolled them: deuce and trey.

"What said I?" he exclaimed despairingly, and pushed the onza he had staked across the table.

A whisper stole from wall to wall. This was as high play as had been seen in the Sea Horse tavern, or, for that matter, anywhere else in Port Royal. And Port Royal was a wild, roysterous bedlam of a place, always crowded with well-pursed planters, and logwood-cutters from the Belize, anxious to forget the noisome swamps in which they worked precariously; and with picaroons, whose pockets bulged with doubloons and pieces-of-eight taken from friend or enemy, as occasion served.

Jenkins and Sir Bellamy stared longingly at the heap of coins. Paradene continued to puff at his cigarro. On the table the dice lay discarded.

"I' God's name, take it up, Paradene," snarled Pellitt. "Y' have won."

"Aye, and a pretty winning," whimpered Sir Bellamy.

"I ha' seen worse in Whitehall," echoed Bully Jenkins.

The black-browed young man picked up the dice, and idled with them whilst the room was silent for a breath. "I'll tell ye, gentles," he said suddenly. "Ha' ye as much more to risk?"

"What? Against your luck?" roared Jenkins. And Sir Bellamy bleated: " 'Twould run to a full cargo, pox me!"

Pellitt, alone of the three, hauled forth a plump purse— "On my own terms, yes," he said. "We, who ha' been losers, to divide our winnings, if we win."

" 'Tis a question not to be decided by me," Paradene reminded him.

"Against his luck?" repeated Jenkins. "Not I!" "Nor I," agreed Sir Bellamy.

Paradene caressed the dice with one hand, with the other fumbled at the gold buttons of his vest. Fragrant smoke trickled from his nostrils as he carefully tipped the ashes from his cigarro. "Y' are not too bold, gentles," he said pleasantly. And heedless of their scowls, proceeded: "I'll make the terms, then. We'll reverse the count.* Ambs dice shall win."

They glared at him, unbelieving.

"Ambs dice?" rumbled Jenkins. "I never heard the like."

"Nor I," mouthed Sir Bellamy.

The hint of a smile twisted Paradene's full lips, but his heavy-lidded eyes were scrutinizing keenly the face of the picaroon. Pellitt was interested. An inveterate gambler, it was easy to see that he was conning the prospects of the proposition.

"Mr. Paradene has not cast below nine these two hours past," he said slowly. "I ha' seen these runs, and they hold. There's no trick in your mind?" he challenged curtly.

Paradene stirred slightly in his seat, and the beautifully-chased hilt of his rapier nudged the table. "I had thought, sir," he answered, "all here were—"

"Oh, no offense, no offense," Pellitt interposed. "A jest, mayhap, some trick o' the dice."

"Honest dice cannot be tricked," Paradene returned with undiminished hauteur.

"Granted, sir," Pellitt conceded. "Do not misread me." He turned to the others. "What say you, eh? A gamester's offer, if you ask me. He risks his run on his naked luck, eh? The odds are against him—or they're not. Who can say? But I never heard o' the play before."

Sir Bellamy's eyes were still bulging. "Why, why, stab me, but 'tis more than that," he blithered. " 'Tis one against three, d'ye see—and the three together. Aye, gentles, we ha' three chances to his one."

There was an added lustre to Bully Jenkins' nose as he heaved a handful of broadpieces from his pocket— "An ill-day for me do you win this, Mr. Paradene," he exclaimed. "But I'll not turn my back on such a main. No, not though I live on salt pork come Michaelmas Day! Egad, they'd drum me out of mess did they hear o' it in the Regiment."

Paradene's face was again expressionless as he fingered the dice. "Shall we throw for our turns?"

They assented, and you might hear the creaking of the signboard outside in the room's silence. Click-clack went the cubes. Click-clack. Skittering over the table in little hysterical darts and leaps. As if there were life in them, Paradene thought, watching quite unconcerned.

Jenkins was to play first, and he cast sixes, with a hearty curse— "What I could not do all afternoon," he bellowed. Pellitt rolled a three and a five— "Two of our chances gone," he rasped disappointedly, and exclaimed in passing the cup to Paradene. "A moment, by your leave. How if none of us throw ambs dice?"

*Ambs dice, the ace, was low point in games of chance originally.

"No dice," rejoined Paradene placidly, and took the cup. "We cast again."

The room tensed closer as the dark-browed man rattled the cubes. They spun cleanly out of the cup, and sped across the rheumy table with a rhythmic dance and sway. A great sigh went up when they settled to rest. He had matched Jenkins' cast.

"Rook me for a bumpkin if he can do aught else," shouted Jenkins. "Now, Sir Bellamy, have at it. Point and edge, man!"

Sir Bellamy giggled nervously. "Popox me, but I'm in a sweat," he yammered. And indeed, the dice rolled forth from his hand so raggedly that they trickled to opposite ends of the table, and stopped so far apart that there was a moment of confusion.

"Here he has it!" "No, no!" "'Tis so!" "What? A one and a two?" "Ambs dice! Ambs dice!" And Ambs dice, or a one and a one, it was.

PARADENE rose leisurely from his seat— "Congratulations, sirs," he said. "You see, 'twas worth the try. The gains were not enough for my needs."

They looked at him puzzled, but were all for continuing the play. "Sure, ye'll have another main, sir." "Let's give you revenge, Paradene."

Paradene shook his head quizzically, plucking at a gold button of his vest. "Give you thanks, but I ha' had sufficient."

"A drink to our next play, then," urged Pellitt.

"If it please you," he assented. And he accepted the proffered goblet, acknowledging the compliments which attended it.

"You ha' played at Court, Mr. Paradene?" queried Sir Bellamy. And Jenkins thundered: "Aye, that was Whitehall nerve! Ye were after my time, I make no doubt, sir?"

"I do not know London," Paradene denied, smiling.

He declined a second goblet, and the winners fell to clamoring amongst themselves what they should do next, each eager to squander some portion of his share, and to say truth, anxious to include Paradene in their diversions. "Who's for the Harry Morgan, and a Bristol man to pluck?" "I ha' a nigger is a master hand at callapee," boasted Sir Bellamy, "and sangaree to wash it down. You'll come, Mr. Paradene?"

But Pellitt, the keenest-witted of the three, swung their tastes in his direction. "I'm for Solita," he said. "What say you we make a night of it at Solita's? A fascinating wench, sirs, and sets the best table in Port Royal. Come, be generous! I am fresh from sea, and a pretty face—"

"Who," interrupted Paradene, "is Solita?"

They all laughed. "Solita? The Spanish Jade!" cried Sir Bellamy. "May I be planted, but y' are new, sir. Sure, all know Solita in Albemarle Street."

"'Tis a sprightly lass, and a generous —to those she favors," supplemented Jenkins.

"In Ours we call her the truest light-o'-love in town."

A shadow crossed Pellitt's face, which Paradene did not fail to note. "Aye, to those she favors," quoth the picaroon. He jingled his burdened purse. "Well, here's that will charm her kind. Are ye with me, sirs?"

They stamped out to the street, Paradene raking his sword-hilt jauntily in their midst. But outside he paused, his gaze ranging wide across the low housetops and the gardens and tree-lined streets to the far-off loom of the Blue Mountains and the nearer range of the roadstead, with its bristle of spars, and the shipyards and rope-walks on the sandy spit tipped by the squat bulk of the fort. It was late afternoon, the sun dropping beyond the azure waters of the Gulf, a land-breeze stealing down from the mountain peaks. The streets were

thronged with planters and their ladies in silks and velvets, afoot, ahorse, in sedan-chairs; with swaggering picaroons, hairy, brown, fierce-eyed fellows in gaudy raiment looted from a thousand prizes; with douce merchants and factors in respectable black and gray; with innumerable blackamoors, husky Gullahs and Fantees and smaller people from the Slave Coast, their throaty tenor voices running an undercurrent through the tumult of sounds; with broad-breeched seamen, pig-tailed and tarry-smeared, from half the world.

Paradene inhaled deeply of the air that was so salty and yet redolent of subtler scents wafted from inland gardens. "Cry your pardon, sirs," he said. "I'm for out-of-doors. A gay evening to you."

"Tush, but of course you'll come," returned Jenkins.

"Another time, Major."

"I know his trouble," giggled Sir Bellamy. "He's for wenching by his lone."

Paradene's smile might have meant anything, and he did not miss a certain element of relief in Pellitt's rejoinder—"So that's it! I say a man knows his own mind, eh? To our next meeting, sir."

They bowed, and strolled off, and Paradene watched them turn up one of the cross-streets within view. Sir Bellamy swayed a trifle, and Jenkins' voice boomed lustily—aye, and there'd been a glint in Pellitt's eye. All drunk, drunk with gold, drunk with liquor. Paradene's lip curled contemptuously, and he forgot them, fingering at the golden buttons of his vest, his free hand curled lovingly around the hilt of his rapier. He was glad to be alone, but lonely. Glad to be in Port Royal town, but sick with a nostalgia for the misty hills and furze-grown coombs, the slaty cliffs and foaming beaches, of his native Cornwall.

He was not yet entirely accustomed in his own mind to being a homeless wanderer. Ever since that night at Tregormli's he had torn himself loose from the arms of his father's young wife, and she had fled from the hall, stomacher ripped wide, screaming hoarsely in her passionate rage: "Squire! Squire! Him would ha 'forced me. Aye, Dickon! Forced me, he would— Look at what mun did." A slut for all the finery that had crammed a carrier's cart, a slut with the morals and manners of the gypsy vagabond she had been when the old man, riding home drunk from Penzance assizes, had caught her up on his saddle-bow and fetched her home "for a warming-pan," he had said. "And if you like it not, Dickon lad, why 'tis all one to me. I'll make a lady o' the——, and get me sons wi'out that snaky look o' your mother's eyes."

Dickon had stayed on at Tregormlis, anticipating what must happen: the unbridled extravagance she'd lure the old man into, the gradual decay of the farms. A thankless task. Bawdy talk, and wild, endless swigging in hall, the manor house falling into wreck and ruin, faithful servants turned away, a thieving gypsy crew in their places.

Suddenly she'd left off her slights. He was forever coming upon her in dark corners, on the cliffs, amongst the coombs. It was: "Dickon, would ye ride wi' me?" "Dickon, 'tis a sightly scarf ye wear." "Dickon, d'ye give a thought to Sukey that's your true mother—" And then the slow lift of amorous glance.

All leading to that last terrible night when his father had come at him with sword drawn, and he'd knocked the old man into a bloody heap with a hastily-flung stool.

He could hear still her mocking screech as he'd snatched the Armada rapier from the rack and looted what coins there were in the armory chest: "Take it, aye, take it! I'll see ye hang doubly for thief and murderer."

It had strained his self-command to keep from throttling her. And he'd ridden, with hell flogging his horse's heels,

for Plymouth. Always he'd loved the sea, and his cruises with the fishermen stood him in good stead. The gold from the chest had purchased a share in a trader bound for the Virginia plantations, and there he'd made a profit on his investment and seized a chance to transship to a vessel sailing for Jamaica. If he had nothing left to show for his efforts, at the least, he'd learned the tricks of deep sea work. He could navigate and carry sail with the best of them. It was in his blood, a heritage from the ancient Phoenician rovers who had bred their strain into the Cornish folk. Never once had he lost sight of his objective, a world of his own of sea and sky, a deck of his own beneath his feet, mayhap an enemy to bear down upon.

HIS thoughts were disturbed by an outburst of squeals and boisterous laughter from the cross-street up which had disappeared his late companions. He sauntered curiously towards it, and presently discerned, in the midst of its sun-dappled expanse, a green-and-gold sedan-chair, around which danced its bearers, a pair of burly negroes in matching livery, striving desperately to protect their bare calves from the pricking sword-points of the three roysterers.

As he watched, a slender figure leaped from the chair, offering vigorous protests to the tormenting of the chairmen, but the gamesters, hilarious with luck and wine, evaded all her efforts at restraint.

Paradene's eyes flickered, his pace quickened. He was on the scene before anyone noticed him.

"By your leave, sirs," he said, gentle-voiced, "this is rough sport."

They desisted, panting. "The incredible Paradene," exclaimed Pellitt. "Popox me," gasped Sir Bellamy, "but you missed a rare burst o' sport, sir." "Aye," agreed Jenkins, " 'twas as good as bear-baiting."

Paradene's jaw-muscles twitched. " 'Tis not to my fancy," he rejoined in his curt way.

And Pellitt's eyes narrowed— "St. Paradene, is it, forsooth?" he mocked.

"If you like," Paradene answered quietly.

The picaroon darted a wicked thrust at one of the chairmen. His blade would have passed over the head of the woman who had emerged from the sedan, kneeling in the sand to tie a wispy kerchief about the leg of the second negro, but Paradene struck it aside with a quick blow of his arm— "No more," he said, and there was a ring to his tone none missed.

The woman looked up, and for the first time he really saw her.

She was beautiful in a lissome way, he thought. Big dark eyes that were now black with anger, set in a sparkling mobile face. Her dress of muslin was simply a second skin.

"Por Dios," she cried in a quaint accent that was Spanish, yet not Spanish, "thees is a gentleman. As for you, dogs, who would harm poor black men, you have no honor, and so I will tell hees excellence' the Governaire, heemself." She stood up, stamping her foot, naked in a tiny golden slipper, and cursed at them. And it seemed to Paradene that the curse came as innocently from her lips as from a child's, ignorant of the import of its meaning.

Jenkins, abruptly sobered, was clutching Pellitt's wrist; the picaroon was staring at Paradene, his sinister features white and tense. It was Sir Bellamy, fatuously perturbed, who giggled: "But Solita! Would ye make this fuss for a frolic? Sure, if ye hadn't bidden us begone—"

"You stop me, drunk in the street," she returned. "I am what I am, but I am so good that I can choose who veesits me. I will not have such as you, Sair Bellamy—nor such as your friends."

Pellitt interposed. "If it please you," he said, "the matter was but a jest. But

there is that between this gentleman and me—"

Paradene took a step forward, and now his manner was harsh and menacing. "'Twas a sorry jest," he broke in. "And 'tis not the custom of gentlemen to offer such to womenkind, nor to take advantage of those too weak to resist them nor to breed quarrels in a woman's face."

Pellitt strove to wring his wrist from Jenkins' clasp, but the major clung to it, his bulbous nose flaming scarlet. "Sirs, sirs," he exclaimed, very agitated. "I will have you remember I am an officer of Government, and though you be both my friends, I will not suffer that this matter come to any conclusion but an expression from both that you each intend no reproach to t'other."

"My words stand," Paradene answered indifferently.

"And mine," the picaroon rasped.

"Oh," moaned Sir Bellamy, "what a broil, what a broil! I beg of you, gentles, take thought to the good of all of us. If the Governor hears, he'll clap the lot in Spanish town gaol."

"He'll not hear." Bully Jenkins at last was grimly competent. "For I say strait to the two of 'em 'twill be I will first whistle up the watch."

Solita laughed, and the silvery trill echoed through the sunset radiance—"Yess, my Boolly," she agreed. "And I say too, I Solita, that if Captain Pellitt does not go away I will go to the Port Admiral, and I weell tell somethings I 'ave heard of hees last voyage. There are many sailors who come to my cookhouse w'en they are hongry, and I nevair say no to them."

Pellitt, with a muttered oath, wrenched himself free from Jenkins, and made off, slapping his sword into scabbard as if he sought to break the tip.

Major Jenkins wiped his dripping features; Sir Bellamy tittered. "A common fallow, sirs, if you ask me. So now we'll see you home, Solita."

"'Ave I ask you?" she retorted. "Run along, poor Sair Bellamy, weeth the Boolly Jenkins, and talk to yourselves that you should not harrm black men who 'ave no souls to make them proud."

"Ah, don't be kittenish, lass," boomed the Major, rattling his pouch until it sounded like golden bells. "I say nought against Pellitt. A mite above himself, no doubt. And unscrupulous, they say. But after all, ye know Temple and me, eh? And we have that—"

"Oh, that!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "Money! Always money! Solita has planty of money. And she knows where she can have more eef she need' it. Go away! Thees gentlemen shall see me home."

The disgruntled pair eyed Paradene with a droll mixture of envy and resentment.

"I fear me your luck's not broke, sir," deplored Jenkins. And Sir Bellamy squeaked dismally: "To be rooked i' the heart, Paradene, is a sorer loss than i' the pocket. Oh, blood me, blood me, I say! I ha' clean forgot my classics, but whoever was goddess o' chance y' ha' poured libations to Venus." He giggled shrilly. "A neat turn, Jenkins, popox me but 'tis."

"I ha' heard neater," grunted the Major. "Welladay, I know when I'm not wanted." He bowed over Solita's hand. "Forgive us, fair goddess," he begged ponderously. "A trick a new-joined cornet would be shamed for. But so 'tis to have youth i' the heart, eh, Mr. Paradene? Your servant, sir! A pleasure to ha' known you, sir." He sighed, and to Solita: "Aye, ye jade! A good gamester, a rare loser. Faith, he should be one of Ours. Think on it, sir," he appealed to Paradene.

Solita made a face after the retreating pair. "And you," she exclaimed, rounding upon Paradene. "I do not even know surely your name, sair gentleman." Being satisfied in this, she demanded: "You are English?"

"I am from Cornwall in England," he said.

"So," she observed shrewdly. "That is something to be proud of, my friend, Richard. But I do not like that name. Eet ees too—too much like the Port Admiral when he ees on hees pomp."

"Call me Dickon," he suggested, laughing.

She clapped her hands. "Deeckon! That I like much. I am Solita," she said with great dignity. "Weel you come weeth me to my 'ouse?"

He bowed his assent, and assisted her into the chair, chatting with her as he walked along beside it, restricting his long legs to the gait of the bearers.

Solita's house was in Albemarle Street—convenient to the town residences of the gentry in King Charles. Paradene noted amusedly—a pleasant, white-walled villa backed by a luxuriant garden and numerous outbuildings. He sniffed appreciatively the perfume of the flowering vines which rioted over the top of the garden wall.

"You like my 'ouse?" she asked, delighted. "Come in weeth me."

"I may not," he denied courteously. "Another time, perhaps."

She was furious. "You do not like me?"

"On the contrary," he returned. "But if, indeed, Solita, we are friends, you will take my word—"

"You go to fight that man?" she challenged. "That Pellitt? I tell you, Deeckon, he ees not for you to soil your sword. He ees pirate, not picaroon. I know! All the picaroon', they know; the merchant', they know. Only the stupid officer', like Boolly, the stupid plantair', like Sair Bellamy, they do not know."

Again Paradene's heavy lids lowered. He laughed shortly. "I had wondered," he said. "But be at ease, chuck. I had no thought of him."

She caught his hand—"But you weell come, truly?" "So soon as I may," he promised. She drew closer to him, her great dark eyes plumbing his face, flitting over his clothes and gear.

"I see," she said suddenly. "Weell you let Solita— But no, you are not that kind of man. For that I like you more. I think I love you a leettle, Deeckon—as much as I can love any man. And my love is not good for one man. I am a fire. I burn. One man! No, no, not for Solita. But if evair you weesh anything, anything at all, you come to Solita. I can command all for you. The Governair, the Port Admiral, the beeg peeg in the red coat at the Fort, the merchant', the plantair', all I make dance, eef I weesh."

Paradene's teeth flashed white. "There is a small favor you might grant me."

"It shall be done," she asserted imperiously.

"Then, prithee, mistress, tell me one I may go to who will honestly purchase of me a, a trinket or two."

Her breast stirred tumultuously under the sheer muslin. "I thought so," she murmured to herself. "Oh, Deeckon, if you would— But no, you are right. Go to Mendoza, the Spanish Jew, at the far end of Bristol Street, and say Solita sent you."

"That will I, and many thanks."

She held up her flower face. "Keess me," she said. And he quivered under the flame of that caress. But she was gone before he could repeat it, flitting like a moth through the door a mulatto held open for her, although he thought he heard a chord of weeping laughter as the portal closed.

"'TIS a witch—no light-o'-love," he muttered to himself, and strode away into the twilight and the flower-scents that pulsed in his nostrils in a vague harmony with the clashing music of the boughs overhead.

A couple of doors down he was accosted by a short, broad shouldered man in the wide breeches of a sailor—"Beggin'

yer honor's pardon, but there ain't amany as gits a kiss from Solita and plays the bravest main Port Royal ever see, all in the same day."

Paradene peered harder at the fellow, detected the bloody bandage sheathing one hand. "What is it?" he asked. "What would you have, man?"

The seaman wiggled with embarrassment. "Well, yer honor, I ain't a beggar, but here I be wi' a green wound, and nought in me pockets—"

"Did you flee your ship?" interrupted Paradene.

The fellow snorted indignantly. "I was throwed off, not good enough for the cursed pirate, me that had a splinter in me 'and a-servin' o' the for'ard culverin'. Me not knowin'," he added hastily, "the chase was as right English as ourselves, sir."

"Why were you thrown off?"

"Because, yer honor," the fellow answered sturdily, "I told Cap'n Pellitt that ol' Sim Whitticombe would turn i' the grave o' him if he knowed his son, Sam'l, had turned pirate."

"Come with me," ordered Paradene, and led the way into Bristol Street, now dim and deserted.

Mendoza's establishment stood apart from its neighbors, a range of connected structures, evidently comprising warehouse, residence and counting room. Only in the latter was there a show of lights, and Paradene knocked briskly at its door.

"Come in," bade a deep, resonant voice. The interior blazed with candles, and Paradene, blinking his eyes against the glare, was surprised to find that it was more like a study than a place of business. The walls were hung with maps and pictures and trophies of the sea, and there were many cases of books in different languages: English, Spanish, Portugese, Italian, French, Dutch.

The Jew was seated at a desk in the center, but he rose promptly to receive his visitors, regarding them with a grave directness, neither offensive nor inquisitive, but indicated clearly his intent to gauge their several characters.

The sailor he dismissed at a glance. "How may I serve you, sir?" he asked Paradene.

"I have a small matter or two I would sell, Mr. Menzoda. I am to say that Solita sent me."

Mendoza acknowledged the mention of her name by a slight inclination of his head. "What are these matters?" he inquired.

Paradene drew his dagger, and cut off one of the lower buttons of his vest. "One, and it may be two, of these," he said. "I have no idea of their worth."

Mendoza scrutinized the button under a candelabrum. "A ducat of Venice, beaten into shape," he murmured. "It is fine gold . . . I can allow you ten pieces-of-eight for it. Venetian gold ducats are rare, sir."

"You are generous, Mr. Mendoza," replied Paradene. "Natheless, the needs of this poor fellow require that I should trespass further upon you, if I may."

Mendoza glanced casually again at the sailor as Paradene sliced off a second button— "Not one of your crew," he remarked, "for I will not disguise from you, Mr. Paradene, that I know who you are. It is my business to know who comes and goes in Port Royal, and you, sir, have aroused comment."

"I never saw the man until a few moments since," returned Paradene, offering the button. "He has a raw wound must be treated. Could you commend me to a surgeon?"

Mendoza tossed the buttons on his desk. "I am not unskilful at surgery," he said. "Undo that bandage, my man." He conducted them through a door into a room which held a table and buffet rich with plate. "A dressing of spirits of wine should banish the noxious poisons," he continued. "And I have here an ointment which will soothe the

bruised flesh, and aid it to draw together. But the operation will be painful, I fear, so we will give you first a dram of rum."

Whitticombe's face brightened. He hadn't understood what had gone before, but rum was a different matter. "Yes, sir. Thank y' kindly, sir," he said, knuckling his forehead.

Paradene watched respectfully whilst Mendoza, with patient, tender fingers, ever mindful of the seaman's occasional groans, first bathed, then dressed, the wound, finally rebandaging it with linen.

A knock on the counting house door reverberated through the building. "If you will pardon me," he apologized. "I was not expecting a caller, but—oblige me by pouring yourself a glass of wine, sir. I shall not be long."

Whitticombe, draining his r u m, croaked gratefully: "Ah, yer honor, I'll never forget that old gaffer! I'll fetch 'im home a bishop's robe the next time we run down one o' they galleons on the Cartagena cruise." He cocked his head to one side. The rumor of conversation in the counting room was rising higher. One voice, especially, was growing raucous, strident. "Naow, that's a funny lay," muttered the seaman. "I'd swear by Bible oath—"

The strident voice became distinct in its menace: "—There's but the one choice. Take what I bid ye, or I'll run ye through where ye stand. And after that, who'll care what chanced your gold?"

Paradene was out of his chair in one bound, sword drawn— "Bide where you are," he snapped to Whitticombe, and flung open the counting house door.

Mendoza, tall and unafraid, was standing by his desk. Opposite stood Pellitt, features distorted with rage, blade in position to thrust.

"You should ha' called me, sir," exclaimed Paradene.

Mendoza smiled calmly. "I do not seek to involve another life to protect mine. I have near run my span."

Pellitt had involuntarily stepped back a pace. "Rot me, 'tis St. Paradene," he sneered.

"What is the trouble?" Paradene asked.

"I will not buy this man's cargo of pirated goods," explained Mendoza. "With picaroons I deal, not with those who rob and slay their own people."

"A lie," snarled Pellitt.

Paradene smiled. "I have inside a member of your crew whom you put overside for that he refused to tolerate such conduct," he said.

"Oh, God's curse on ye," shouted Pellitt. "That rogue, Whitticombe! I'll skewer the mangy pack o' ye. There's Frenchmen in Tortuga are not so touchy where they buy good stuffs."

And he was at Paradene like a wolf, hoping to catch him off-guard; but Paradene parried the thrust so nicely that it merely ripped his coatskirts.

"Back," Paradene implored Mendoza, and seeing, out of the tail of his eye, that Whitticombe had disobeyed orders and come running in with a chair for weapon in his one good hand, he added: "You fool, stay out! You'll be under my feet, the pair o' you."

He sprang sideways to avoid another furious lunge, and Whitticombe yelled: "I'll halloo the watch, yer honor!"

"I say you'll not," grunted Paradene. "This scoundrel is for my sword alone. He's—" another leap, backward this time—"overfond of jests."

Mendoza, as cool as though the business in hand were but the casting-up of his accounts, supported the command: "Mr. Paradene knows his strength. We will even trust in him."

"Aye, do," mocked Pellitt. "I'll skewer the three o' ye."

But the pirate-picaroon had worn down his energies in those opening rallies. He was nigh twice Paradene's age, and slowly began to give ground to the cool precision of the attack. Once, dodging swiftly, he seized a book from a

chair, and hurled it at his opponent's face, but Paradene swayed his head to avoid it, and took advantage of Pellitt's being off-balance to pink him in the shoulder. Pellitt cursed, and came on, and then, for a little while there was a deadly silence, emphasized by the clanging of the blades, the irregular thudding of booted feet, the shrill whistling of breath in nostrils laboring to supply hard-driven lungs.

Pellitt was weakening. That telltale stain on his shoulder was spreading, spreading. His sword was barely in time to meet Paradene's unhurried efforts, and to say truth, the Armada rapier that a Paradene had taken from a grandee of Aragon was two inches the longer blade. Pellitt made one more frantic try. He could not hope to match Paradene with strength or skill. So he dropped to his knees under a lightning parade, and thrust forward and up, blindly, unsteadily. His point passed between Paradene's arm and body, and Paradene ran him through the heart as he crouched there, gasping for breath. Pellitt tumbled over on the floor, the coins that stuffed his pockets tinkling like so many tiny, golden chimes.

Mendoza passed around his desk, and looked down at the pinched face from which the evil, no less than the color, was fading. "May Jehovah show him mercy," the Jew said soberly. "Mr. Paradene, I am in your debt for more than the value of two Venetian ducats."

Paradene, cleansing his blade on a cloth Whitticombe had proffered him, stiffened proudly. "Sir," he said, "there must be no talk of reward."

"I was not thinking of reward," replied Mendoza. "I am a man of business, sir, and perhaps we could do business together. But tell me, you are a navigator?"

"Yes."

"One thing more, then. Why did you gamble your winnings at the Sea Horse this afternoon in the fashion that was reported to me?"

Paradene started. There was nothing the man did not know, apparently. But he relaxed immediately, and a secret smile tinged his forbidding features.

The Jew crossed to a window which looked upon the anchorage. "Do you see those lights?" he asked. "That is the ship of this man who has just died, the *Ladye Fayre*. A stout ship, and a true. I am of a mind to purchase her, and make her an honest picaroon. If you will be her master, you shall have a half-interest in her, and you may buy her outright from your prize-money when you will."

"Batten me down," Whitticombe exclaimed hoarsely behind them. "Ye'd never say no, yer honor! And sure, ye'd take me wi' ye?"

Paradene knew one heartening instant of elation before bitterness overcame him. He recalled, step by step, the chain of incidents which chance had provided to yield him this opportunity he sought most of all. All chance! Chance as heartless as the clattering dice which so often were its agents.

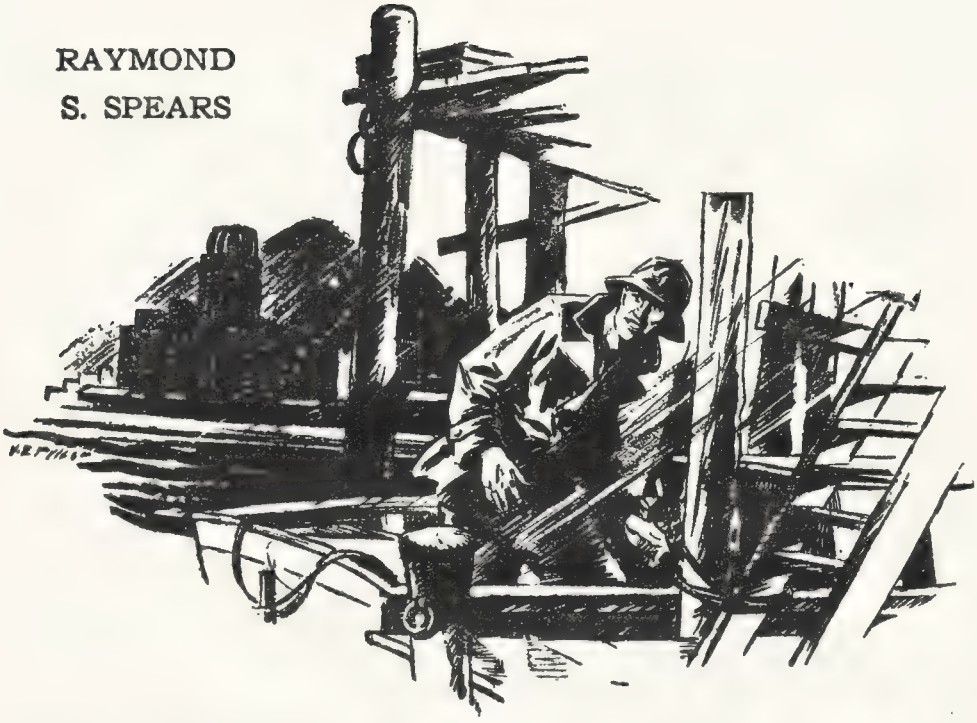
"I'll take your offer, sir," he answered, "on the one condition that you suffer me to alter her name." "Granted," returned the Jew. "What shall it be?" "The *Sorry Jest*. 'Twas a sorry jest brought her to me."

"You are young, Captain Paradene," Mendoza answered gently. "Sufficiently young to flush at the title you have won. It may be you will live to think otherwise. But she shall be the *Sorry Jest*. You will dine with me? Good! I will call my servants to remove this unfortunate man. You need have no fears for your deed. The Governor will welcome his death." A benevolent light softened Mendoza's usually sombre eyes. "If he were even unwilling to feel so, it is probable that I, and Solita, might lead him to—ah— But you have met Solita."

THE END

Another story of Paradene will appear soon.

RAYMOND
S. SPEARS



The HARBOR KLEPTOMANIAC

(An Off-The-Trail Story)

SHIPYARD BAY was surrounded by great warehouses with solid fire walls, without even iron shuttered windows. Covered docks that had the look of minding their own business, no matter what happened, jutted far out into the half-moon basin. By day, the neighborhood streets throbbed with the heavy traffic of trucks. By night, wandering zephyrs laden with strange tropical odors, whiffs of stinging spices, permeated the moist, thickened air. Alley cats appeared, and shadowy human figures passed.

Next to the water, around a corner of one of Manhattan's shortest streets, a narrow strip between two of the huge structures reached from the sidewalk like an alley to the water. A long time ago an old man had refused to part with his land and water rights, and now his heir, Wynn Duncan, owned it as long as he should live, taxes paid—one of those queer bequests by which peculiar people reward those who keep patience and faith with them.

Wynn Duncan was, when on the job, a quiet, commonplace man to look at, with no sign about him of strange plyings in the night. He was of medium height, roundish countenance, undistinguished eyes, exciting no curiosity in Bibdle Herbs, Inc., in the Aromatic Stock Building, handling weeds, herbs, roots, gums and other bases of cosmetic lines. Duncan, working in the sorting shed, recognized dried leaves, tested qualities, made sure of the appraisals, earned his wages, useful, inconspicuous —satisfactory.

He was never late arriving on the job, never quit early, and in the rush seasons or boom times he didn't mind working over-hours, if needed. The herbs organization called him Old Clockwork.

Almost always, Wynn Duncan car-

ried a bundle or box in his hand or under his arm as he went home. He would pause at his house and glance along the empty street as if the loneliness troubled him a bit. Occasionally, he would turn his face upward, to see the slit against the sky which his fifty-foot strip from curb to tidewater made between the high, blank, hostile walls that seemed to lean over his own low roof.

He let himself in the front way up the steps, closing the old fashioned, thick oak doors behind him. In the morning he came out the same way, pausing to try the door, making sure it was locked, and sweeping the street with his glance.

His house was two stories high with a basement almost as high as a story, a brownstone front with windows covered with dust, behind which were yellow blinds and drawn yellow shades which never showed a light behind them.

Inside the old house the aroma of warehouse, river, medicinal herbs, aromatic specialties and rich cargoes was pronounced. Darkness prevailed through the hallway and into the rear. The house was of surprising depth, considering its height and width. Duncan would look into the old parlor, sitting room and library on the first floor, switching on electric globes, the lights revealing the home-made job of wire installation. In each room were bundles, boxes and packages, some wrapped in burlaps, some in other weaves or in paper. The man's eyes gloated over the strange furnishings of his home, unperturbed by the mess.

Down in the basement he had his dining room and kitchen, which was fitted with a gas range. At the back was a high screened balcony, which in winter was glazed for a sun porch. Usually he ate there, looking down on the boat slip at the back of the lot. From the front of the house none would have suspected. He had skiffs, launches, and a cabin cruiser, with oars, pikes, outboard and marine motors, tackle, and salvage—a tiny shipyard. Perhaps occasionally a stevedore, a third mate, somebody out yonder in the towering piers and sheds caught glimpses of that slip—what did it amount to? Imagine any one on a big ocean-going freighter wasting time on such small stuff!

Even the sneak boat of the Harbor Police, patrolling along there, would see nothing to arouse suspicion; perhaps it was a private-party livery; perhaps it was just a whimsy of some old harbor man; a bay and tributaries supporting twenty or thirty thousand small craft had stranger nests of water birds than this quiet slip seemed to be. A fish pole, a net reel, buoys dragged out on the bank, old lobster pots and the like indicate nothing of value here to a crew of river pirate hunters and wharf rats. Wynn Duncan was more than content to have things so.

Afloat he was another man, living dreams.

He had a one-man boat for every weather. Come darkness upon the long frontage of East River, he took stock of the tide card, slipped out of his Bibdle Herbs, Inc. office clothing into rubber hip boots, tarry trousers, a blue flannel shirt and an old, fuzzy peajacket, pulled a sou'wester over his ears, and made his way down the slope of his back lot. High tide or low, he would choose a boat and ease into the shadowy gloom, slanting to make use of the flow of the estuary.

In one bit of a skiff he would go for miles and hardly show beyond a pier head in the open water. In another of his boats he could shove off on a Friday night and come back on a Monday morning, and none be the wiser but himself, nobody dreaming how far he had been in that craft of his. He could remember the times when he came back light more easily than he could recall the times when he would lug ashore cargoes of whose shipping into his own lair he alone knew. And when he plodded

into the office of Bibdle Herbs, Inc., he knew with satisfaction that the girls at the desk, the boy in the outer office, the old man himself, or any one who looked at him would think, "Just the stock man," turning back to his own job caring not at all to know any more.

An impassive face peculiarly reddened and roughened gave the stock man's sparkling, gem-blue eyes an odd expression. All day long he worked among the herbs, swiftly, surely. A spoonful of boiling water on a pinch of leaves, the smell of seeds crushed in a mortar, the fragrance of incense from a burning fragment—a long and tedious process of chemical breakdown and reaction was hardly more accurate than Wynn Duncan's quick tests. The old man paid many thousands of dollars in checks on word from the stock room.

One day an old tramp steamer prowled the Lower Bay and drove its blunt nose and old round hull, painted red in places and black in others, up East River under Brooklyn Bridge, and with no thanks to a tug or more than a cussword to the tidal current, poked her nose into a long, narrow hole between a patchy looking shed of a pier and a number of scows that looked fit to sink from rot and punches below the belt. Odd looking deck hands handled ropes of ill-assorted sizes and ages. Whistles and wrenching sounds invaded an already overburdened atmosphere. And then creaking of winches and falling of pawls died away, quiet came, and only the rattling of stevedore trucks rushing out a ship's cargo continued into the darkening of the night, shrill blasts of whistles controlling the hoists. The old tramp, *La Baroque* of Lost Sound, had hardly a glow of light upon it, even street beams missing it, casting shadows instead.

The crew of the tramp had gone ashore. The captain, Mark Wisler, was uptown. There might have been some one on board—but perhaps no one was. The only commodious cabin was the captain's. There he kept everything—and when he came aboard just after dawn, he found the safe door fallen out upon the floor. An immensely precious packet that belied the unkempt looks of the wandering cargo hunter of the byways was missing.

Captain Wisler was in no condition to receive a surprise like that. He pitched down in what he called a "fit," and only when the third mate came in on that morning did the police learn that $60,000 worth of pearls were missing.

Reporters and detectives swarmed to the scene. This was a good story and a good case. *La Baroque* did not look like the carrier of a fortune in beautiful pearls. Captain Mark Wisler was an indignant seaman. He surveyed the visitors and listened to their questions with ill-patience. By the time the third batch of inquirers came asking, the seaman knew it had been a mistake to report his loss to such landsmen. Better far if he had been watchful in New York Harbor as he always was down in the hidden channels and tiny ports where one had to keep his eyes open, eternally ready.

Some one had come aboard, using a grapple thrown up to hook on to a rail, and climbed hand over hand. The third mate found where one of the sharp points had pulled down into the tough wood. Leaving, the pirate rat had dropped his own grapple and gone down a piece of two-inch hawser tied with a clove hitch to the rail. He had left red paint tracks up the ship's side from a fresh red patch on the hull. Walking along the deck the raider had left a diminishing series of heel and sole prints in the direction of the cabin.

Captain Wisler looked at his third mate, Jerry Penker, and Jerry looked at him. Despite his youthful countenance, the third mate was from many seas, and the two understood each other. The plainclothes men and Harbor Police said it was another job of the harbor kleptomaniac.

"To hell with landlubbers," the Captain said.

"Aye, aye, sir; to hell with landlubbers," Jerry repeated.

WISLER sniffed the dirty waters and squinted along the waterfront from the crow's-nest. He knew the smell of a thousand ports, no two alike. He would have chosen to lose the $60,000 in pearls anywhere but in New York, if he had his say.

After gazing at the rocking, heaving, swirling tidal current, just at midday, he ordered up an odd craft which he had found useful in many waters—part hollow log, part planked ribs, a pirogue with high prow and stern, suggesting a dory which had inside a bit of a motor and an unsuspected horsepower. The third mate was adept at using that queer runabout, and the two of them were lowered into the slip in a sling. They headed out into the East River to see what they could see, which was only too much if anyone asked them. Twenty thousand, thirty thousand boats, not counting the small ones, sailed there, and they sought for something fifteen to thirty feet long, with power. Perhaps several men were concerned, but one man had done the job, as the red paint tracks proved.

They gazed toward the Battery; perhaps in the fishing slips down around Fulton Market they would find evidence to their needs, but the fishermen were honest and hardworking. The two turned the other way, having Hell Gate in mind. The name was more according. They knew of Erie Basin, canalers and such, and Newton Creek. With sardonic grimaces, they squinted at the fancy boats along by 26th Street, where the Morgue and the millionaires, the Potter's Field and Wall Street have such a peculiar landing in common.

Going by with their odd craft that looked its origin in the tropics, they peered into that strange grouping of hospital and schools, dwellings and gas tanks, islanded prisons and recreation piers, the places of innocence and strange sinkholes suggesting scandal, scoundrelism and disaster. Imagine looking for a packet of pearls, that a man could tuck into the bosom of his dirty shirt, along miles of varied waterfront with commercial shipping from afar and pleasure boats from near-by!

Captain Wisler was a man of sudden, intense emotions—high confidence alternating with deep despair. He turned to the third mate.

"No use," he said. "We're fools to be having hopes. We've lost the price of a good ship—come about and we'll go back."

"Let's go a bit up," Jerry Penker suggested, in the familiar way of good men with good men. "Look't those big warehouses—what do you make of them, anyhow?"

"I'm looking at the sugar refineries instead," the captain grumbled. "I need sweetenin' for the soul of me."

The third mate laughed. A man doesn't run a tramp ship to unknown seas and unheard of ports if he isn't fatalistic. So they went on into the kind of a backwater where loomed the warehouses in brick and concrete, high and mighty and with piers and sheds like feet or legs thrust out from them. And here were three ships, one of which they had spoken in the mouth of the Orinoco—so here was her berth, eh?

And there between two of the docks was a slit like a fjord of no earthly use to any ship. Fifty feet wide, they would make it—and back in it was a house with a back porch, and the slip was full of launches, skiffs, dories and the devil would know what all.

"If this was jungle instead of stinking New York," Jerry laughed, "we'd look in and see 'f they have tortoise shell, mother of pearl, logwood—whatsoevers of any kind. Maybe pearls?"

"Aye," Captain Wisler grunted. "Maybe pearls. Head in—mind yer eye for that eddy and the sweep of the current, boy—"

Thus in jest they swung between those high piles, pier decks and uprising sheds, and went back to the ancient sloop-slip or whatever that deep hole against the rock bluff had been.

They looked over the boats of all work—a forty-foot cabin cruiser, heavy duty yet one-man control; an open launch, a skiff, and a catboat with a block for an outboard. One fast hull with two outboards that were tightly hooded caught their admiration till on the bow they saw two red footprints staining the varnished teakwood deck.

"*Jerry!*" Captain Wisler whispered.

"I were just noticin'," the third mate assured him, vehemently. "Look 't the house. I see nobody squintin' in the ports, Cap'n!"

"Nor I," the Captain spoke sharply. "And we'll be waitin' no invite to come aboard, says I."

So they ran in, made fast, and headed up the slope to the high glassed-in balcony and found no one at home. They lifted the screen door hook and boarded the place, breaking through by springing boards and doing no damage. Inside they sniffed—and they recognized aromas from their own familiar ports of call, spices, raw hides, attars, shell, old liquor, the strange scents that lodge in the memory like barnacles on the planks of a ship.

They searched swiftly through. They discovered cartons of tea, and the markings told them it was for none but royalty. They found a tiny cask of ambergris —$150 an ounce. Standing deep in dust on old shelves they saw flasks of perfume stock base that would profit a ship to carry to France. Stacked against the walls on the floor were old cast glass bottles in burlap bags, and by the seals some had lain for centuries in castle vaults. And they were tempted to drink more than would be good for them when on business.

"You and me," said Captain Wisler, "we're just pikers. We're two for a nickel."

"Aye, sir," murmured Jerry Penker. "It's a good man done all this."

Breathlessly, the two practiced scavengers, beachcombers and traffickers in what-have-you? rolled their eyes and appraised their opportunity. Their ears were cocked for threatening sounds, but all they heard was the low rumble of the city in the distance.

In a room of shelves and tables heaped with corded-up bundles in the wrapping styles they knew to be from Spain, India, China, Pernambuco, Peru, in covers of Caribbean and South Seas, savage, civilized and ancient ports of call—tossed on the top of a heap was a container both saw and instantly recognized.

There were their pearls, the cover of the case raised, the contents glanced at. Then carelessly, not quite closed, the treasure had been dropped amid the rest of those things. Two two sailors stared at that token of their good luck.

Nevertheless they were disturbed, doubtful and awed. The sea had taught them superstition. This disorderly, dusty, neglected place was more than it seemed. They looked into the dim shadows and watched over their shoulders. Captain Wisler hugged his pearls in the case under his arm, but he hesitated to take advantage of all that collection, so much of which was as tempting as any of his pearls—a catch must lie in this somewhere. In his experience the easiest looking had sometimes proved to be the most deadly dangerous.

They stood and gazed at each other. Light of the afternoon sun shone in the front windows through dirt and dangling spider webs. Their own footsteps had started the dust to boiling up from the floor.

"We better use this place—but not by day," Captain Wisler said, and the jar

even of his low voice dislodged a little avalanche of dust and made the curtains of dangling shreds sway. "Eh, matey?"

"Aye—aye," the mate assented. "I'd feel better by night, myself, sir."

Accordingly, they backed out. They sidled along the hallway, startled by their own vague alarms. They had what they had come for. This wasn't enough, but if they made their getaway, they could make a new enterprise of the rest. Many a time they had reconnoitred, and done no more the first time than get the lie of the land. It went against the grain more to take a load now, than to return in the dark after they had talked on it, getting the right of the idea.

The third mate paused as he looked back into the old dining room with its sideboards of china, stained silver, grandeur of old days when the house was a shipyard master's mansion. A bag of old cast glass bottles made him blink. Softly he opened the burlap to look. In the blue iris he saw elongated air bubbles. Within was liquor. The captain had his pearls, and Third Mate Jerry Penker would not go empty handed, for luck, so he caught up the burlap and the clink made him jump in alarm. But he kept the bag.

Out on the balcony, they stood listening and looking back. The very silence of desertion was ominous. In jungles they had found no place so strange as this odd niche between tall, bare walls of great warehouses—no place more doubtful, more tempting, with a queerer taste. They'd feel better about it in the dark.

They snapped the doors shut, springing the locks and letting fall the hooks, pulling the bars with bits of string, and in a minute they were gliding swiftly out along that narrow way, keeping a watch up and around as if they expected some calamity to appear.

Seemingly they had not been there long, but the shadows of the 'long shore structures and high places stretched farther out over the East River. They rocked and surged down the way to their own berth. They caught the dangling hooks and climbed aboard, and hoisted up the pirogue to stow it in the hold, handy against another day of need.

They gave the cook his due orders, and in the captain's cabin they broached the burlap bag and drew the plug of a square bottle made by guess and by God. They took a taste and then another, enough to give clear thought and stimulate good men's ideas, but not too much. Also they regretted the turmoil they had made about the stolen pearls, having yelled too soon, as the captain admitted now, and attracted attention—which is always unwise. The third mate argued in his doubts. Without all the pother, they'd never have caught the feel of the East River, nor gone up the line straight and true to that strange house with the loot of a thousand skiff and launch raids in it, stacked in every dusty room.

"Sure, I see the right of it now," Captain Wisler nodded. "'Tis no crew of pirates, but a lone man. The two of us fear no one *hombre* afloat or ashore the world around, eh, matey?"

"That's true, Cap'n."

So they ate and could find no fault with the limping, one-eyed sea cook, who in turn could find no fault with their appetites when he came to clear away. And when he found the glasses full, in the manner of those who are satisfied with the cook and service, his twisting lips and bulging eye all snapped and moved in good humor.

The night was dark, a lonely wind blowing, and honest folks would do well to be nervous and watchful.

WYNN DUNCAN returned home. He paused at the gate to look both ways along his gloomy street, quiet now in the day's end. A half minute later he slithered through the front doorway, and closed the thick oak planks. Slipping the chain and sliding two wide bolts

to shut out the city and leave the prosy day behind him he sniffed with satisfaction. The smells of the old place pleased his nostrils.

Walking lightly, peering with flash beam into dark, dusty rooms, he exulted in the choosings and pickings accumulated on his thousands of little raids, the tricks and trophies of loot. The capture and not the having of them was the thing he had sought.

He smiled into the old library but snuffled as he paused at the old dining room, uneasy, questioning, wondering. No ordinary sense stirred in doubt; some intuition was alert. Had someone been in this house where no stranger ever came? He looked, saw familiar bundles, shrugged, and went on about his common habits. He pulled off and tossed aside his shapeless, undistinguished daytime garb, and pulled on an old woolen shirt and grimy trousers, and felt comfortable in his rubber boots as he worked over his supper.

Frying big Potomac oysters to eat with hot corn bread and drinking strong, black coffee, he wished the while that he knew Tangier Sound, Hooper's Island, and the shell rocks of the Chesapeake the way a pirate oyster dredger should. Scouse, slumgullion, plum duff, he ate all dishes according to his current dreams, and dreamed according to what he ate. The feastings of the unknown seas and far-away shores were his, there in that bit of backwash of the huge metropolis.

Bringing together his thick flannel lapels, pulling on his fuzzy peajacket and strapping on his black sou'wester with its red flannel lining, picking up a black rubber coat, he prepared for another night of roving the harbor, prowling and scrambling.

He doused his glim and entered the dark at the back of the house. The water in his slip was black, heaving, glistening like the muscular back of a nervous monster. Looking up, he could see the golden glow of the city's lights with the dangling shreds of drizzling, wind-twisted rain not far above the tops of those monster buildings on either side.

A gale was whistling and roaring out of the east. Catspaws reached to the East River. He would need a craft to ride the storm this night, and he would need to watch alive against the tugs and ferries, the ships and hulks abroad with him—watching their lights while he had none.

He chose a tub of a launch, a life-boat model with air tanks and a self-bailer. He strapped an air-bladder around him, pulled together his rubber coat and buckled himself in. Then giving the flywheel a kick, he headed out—and met a lighter coming in as dark as himself.

For a moment Wynn Duncan just gaped. He had to remember back for years to the day when another craft than his own had invaded his stronghold. But surprise seldom numbed him long, and in a boat length he gave a turn to his wheel and headed up the current under the huge wharf, and reversed to keep from banging a cross beam he knew was athwart his way in that gap well up in the dark.

A lighter, sure enough, and no lawful ship with lights burning. She came feeling along, a blacker shadow than the grisly gloom in the narrow way. In the stern of his launch, Wynn Duncan watched her go by, handled by men who knew the way, a man with a big pike on the up-sloping empty foredeck and another dimly visible in the pilot house—the motor controlled from the wheel, easing and shoving, port and starboard screws holding that pollywog hull so that from end to end there wasn't a scum-scrape on a pile on either side the slip. And the big interloper just shoved her nose up to the bank, and came to rest there.

Wynn Duncan blazed with wrath. No need, now, to tell him whence his uneasy forebodings in the house, the sense of change, the difference in the feel and

smell. Of all the hells of notes that Wynn Duncan had ever heard of, here was the most prime and insulting of the lot!

Dazed by the turn about of affairs, the lone raider of the harbor nights was nonplussed. He could do any of a hundred things, but the efficient audacity of this raid on him was stunning. He had fancied himself the hero of ten thousand exploits, the valiant who came to victory against the most hopeless odds of his own choice. And now he felt of his waist and under his arms—this was a night he had gone out on a cruise to find a dirty job to do, and he had forgotten to put on his guns. Just when he needed the right weapons, the best he could muster was a crook-neck clawbar and a wrench or two from the tool locker. Those scoundrels, those harbor sneaks, those night-faring pirates—probably a whole crew of them!

HE SAW the lights and the flash of beams in his house. The shadows cut and changed, came on and off, a dozen goings and turnings. Never had he dreamed himself as unequal to an occasion. For once he didn't know what to do. He could summon the Harbor Police—and when they had rescued him and his, their curiosity would view the cargo of the lighter that had been captured, and they would turn from a thousand recognitions of a thousand reported missing packages of great value to ask:

"And how the hell did you come by this?"

Wynn Duncan could see the dust of fast work flying out of the open doors as the scurrying looters ran the stuff he had so long been accumulating onto the old push-car whose tram-tracks ran to the brink of the shore. He could see the lighter boom swing up a cargo net, lifting aboard in one swoop half a ton or so of what had taken him ten years to gather and cache away.

Time, it seemed to the baffled and desperate watcher, was slow in passing, yet suddenly the lights went out, and a moment later he saw the tall lighter mast stir and heard the motors whispering. They were through. On the bow-deck was a heap of stuff, and scrambling around it, hauling thick, black tarpaulins was an agile figure, lashing the canvas covers down against the wet wind that would be whipping and blasting about in the open of the East River.

"One man?" Duncan gasped, staring. "A deckhand and a cap'n is *all?*"

His imagination had conjured up a whole crew of pirates, of harbor thieves, of guards and rousters who made hopeless odds!

"I'll show them!" Wynn Duncan turned to his motor and gave the flywheel a kick and when the lighter cleared the end of the wharves and swung around into the broadwater, Duncan's launch backed out into the slip and followed.

The lighter rocked and bobbed down the tidal current toward the Battery, going in and out of the thickenings of the storm, sometimes just a gray ghost of the dark, sometimes a clear black figure against the curtains of sheeting storm. After half a mile or so it switched on lights in the thicket of a cloud mist, and came out as if an innocent from nowhere. The pirates knew their stuff, and chasing them down the river, Wynn Duncan came back again to knowing his, as he skirted the ends of piers and cut through the shades of the storm.

Only when the lighter turned into the slip where lay the tramp, *La Baroque*, did Wynn Duncan realize the game he was up against. He had recovered his calm. He had to laugh. Come to remember, now, all that pother about the casket of pearls had been the squeals of pirates at losing their own! They had called in the police, yelled their anguish for the reporters—paralyzed at their own dismay and disaster. But they were good, those scoundrels! They had come

back, and depended on themselves again.

"I'll show them—" Duncan reflected.

The dim hulk of the little tropical tramp was all dark. Rain poured off the decks through the scuppers. The greasy-black swells sloshed through the night, struck the piles with spurts of pale fountains, and the surges heaved the lighter where she lay alongside. The boom swung over the deck, the net was lifted like a bag and carried over the tramp's deck and lowered into the hatch with that slim deckhand riding her, signaling with a handline instead of a whistle.

"They know their stuff," Duncan grumbled, coming in unawares and making his launch fast under La Baroque's stern. He threw his grapple and climbed up to look over the proceedings.

He slipped in the dark into the captain's cabin, where he stretched his hands here and there, taking what he needed in the dark. Then he sat back in one of the luxurious chairs, waiting. He heard the last light load lowered into the hold. He heard the hatch dragged over and battened down.

Another significant sequence of sounds did not surprise him, but awakened his admiration. When the lighter had done its job, the scamps warped her around and headed her out into the night, all dark, her motors running slowly and her steering wheel in beckets to go off wherever the tide, propellers, a set rudder and the winds listed—to be the mystery and profanity of the harbor—a ghost ship, stolen, moving under power with no men aboard.

A night of it, sure enough—and the worst yet to be! They were tired, that precious pair who had spent the dark doing a full crew's work, a-raiding and paying back. They stamped and they straightened their tired bodies, shook their raincoats and headed for the captain's cabin, where they would top off the night of it with a good nip and a word of self-congratulation, in proper sailor fashion.

And so they came forward to the house and the key rattled in the lock, carelessly, as Duncan's master key had not done. The door opened and two figures entered, bringing the smell of the salty storm with them. They slammed the door and felt of the ports, at hand, and looked around in the habit of those who plan and deal behind the curtains.

Then battery lamps flared on and in the instant the whole cabin was aglow. As it chanced, the captain and the third mate were faced away from their visitor when they pulled off their wet rubber coats and threw aside their sou'westers and stretched, yawning with the drip running down their browned faces. Their yawns were cut in twain and their mouths went open when they discovered him, sitting there with most of the wet dried off his black rubber, and the strap of his sou'wester loosened under his chin, and his cold blue eyes regarding them.

Under one hand on the chair arm was the casket of pearls that had made so much fuss in the newspapers. In the other was a gun with its black snout like a cannon port.

"Well," Duncan said. "What the hell do you think you've been doing?"

The two lower jaws snapped up audibly, and noisy gulps ensued.

"Why," the third mate Jerry Penker exclaimed, speaking the first thought that came to his mind, "getting caught dead to rights, looks like to me, sir!"

"And be damned to you!" Captain Wisler added, under the icy gaze of the visitor.

Wynn Duncan held the gun steadily, unwaveringly, as he had always known he would hold a gun if faced with something like this; looked at the two grim, reckless men, veteran plyers of his own right trade, but their tricks and traffics went over all the seas and his own voyages always ended in the little slip. He felt a warming, but it did not come up into the chill, accusing stab of his eyes.

Captain Wisler snorted. "Let's have a drink, if you don't mind—the way she lies."

"Sure, but have a care."

"Careful it is, sir!" the mate said, respectfully.

He carried over a cast, square bottle with bubbles in the glass, in a brown hand, browner than the hand of a man who spent his days in Bibdle Herbs, Inc. When he uncorked and poured, the fragrance of another century spread through the cabin.

"'Tis a good taste—drink hearty!" the captain exclaimed.

"Aye, *I'd* be knowing *that!* But let it pass, for the moment!" the visitor said, the glitter in his eyes like the glint off iceberg tips.

The two men, standing, had started to toss off the beakers, but they stopped short at the tone and look. They set the glasses down, tactfully. The advantage was all their visitor's.

"Yes, sir," the two said in one breath, blinking.

"But drink—"

"True—True!" Captain Wisler nodded, drinking deep in the grand manner of hospitality but not in joy. Three smacks ensued. A warm glow at a chilly reception would not be gainsaid.

"Our mistake, sir," Captain Wisler confessed, nodding. "Can we talk it over, now, as man to man, sir?"

"Well," the frigid eyes narrowed and by the looks of him, the two had no doubt of the seriousness of their position, "I'll listen."

"We could ask no more, sir!" the slim third mate sighed, with relief, looking at Captain Wisler who had the word now, but hesitated.

"*You* notified the police," the visitor accused, "*You* told the newspaper men, and *you* set the metropolis by the ears—You lubbers from the Spanish Main, from the Gulf and the Caribbean, from the Swamps and the Islands and the jungle rivers. Do we understand one another?"

"Aye, aye, sir—" the two nodded, and Third Mate Penker pulled a stray lock of his curly red hair on his forehead.

"I'd take it kindly," the captain added, "if you'd mention your terms, sir."

"I could claim my own and these." The man with the gunbutt hand indicated the casket of pearls.

"Yes, sir, aye, aye." Both sighed at that obvious truism.

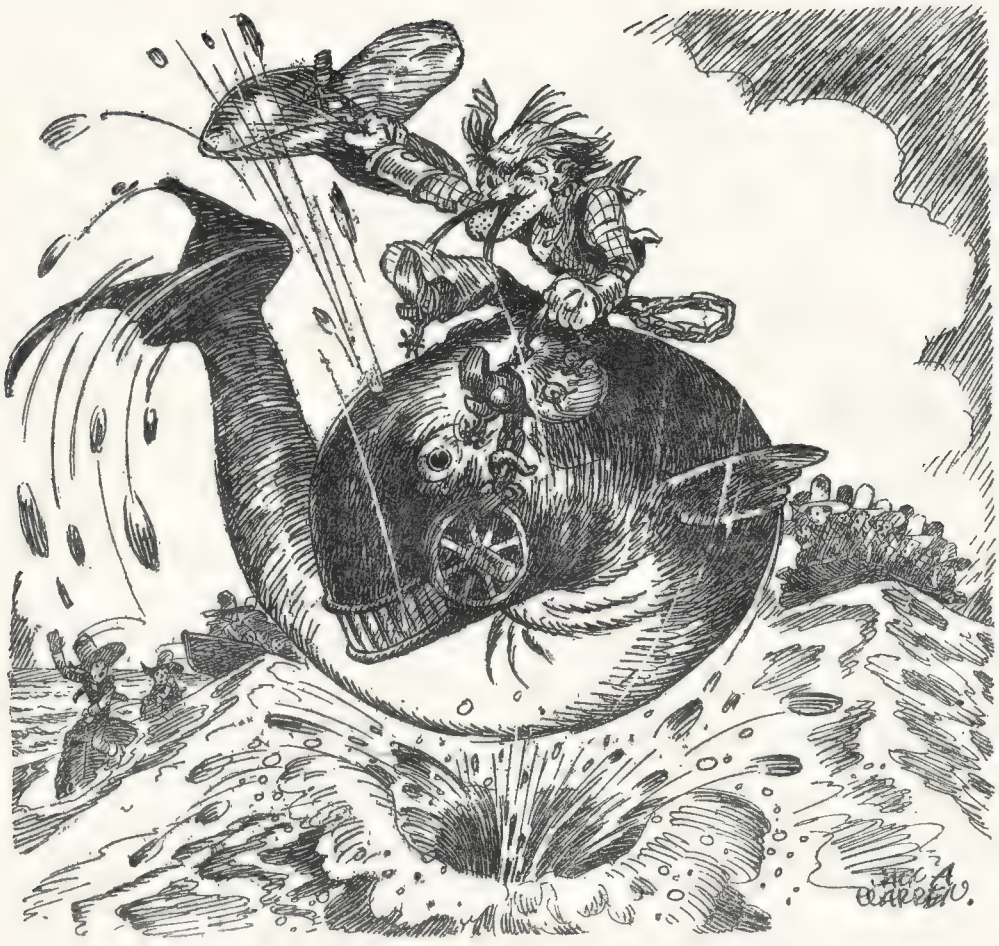
"I know herbs, perfumes, the rare things of the tropics, what they are worth. Has *La Baroque* a purser?"

"No, sir, I keep my own books, sir," the captain fairly shouted. "But, by God, sir—"

"My name is Wynn Duncan," the visitor offered, with a one-eye squint as the captain hesitated, wonderingly. "You can leave me and mine here with *this*." He raised the pearls that would buy a ship. "Or we'll split three ways on the ship's income net and I'll throw in what's mine in the hold, and sign on as purser. What say?" His look was wistful, full of dreams.

"What say? A man like you. What'd you say, purser?" Captain Wisler cried as though he wanted to hear it again, turning to take La Baroque's book from its slot in his desk with the articles the crew must sign.

Duncan tossed the gun sliding across the rug into the corner and put the casket of pearls onto the inlaid table, taking off his rubber coat to sign on as Third Mate Penker poured the drinks.



PECOS BILL--MAN OF MIGHT

By TEX O'REILLY

OLD VERACITY UPDIKE was suffering from the world's champion hangover. He had come boiling into Tondo City on the railroad the week before to do his winter drinking before the fall roundup. His alcoholic orgies had been a four star success, but all things must come to an end.

His last dollar had taken a one way trip across the bar, and the bartender had declared a moratorium on his credit. His song had ended, and pessimism soured his soul. When these moods took him, he always sought relief in conversation, he craved an audience, but the townfolk were too wary. His oratorical jag was worse than his battle with the bottle. He would just open his mouth and let the wind sigh through his vocal cords, and woe betide the listener who tried escape, especially if Veracity was dilating on the subject of the mighty Pecos Bill, his hero.

That morning old Veracity wandered into the saloon, gave a hopeful glance at the bartender, and sighed. That stone-hearted worthy showed no sign of weakening. His last hope blasted, Veracity fell to reading the back numbers of newspapers. These newspapers

had been pasted on the walls as a substitute for wall paper, and the inconsiderate paperhanger had stuck them on upside down. Veracity's reading was something of an acrobatic feat. To his other aches and pains was added a crick in the neck.

His figure untwisted when Jeff Calhoun, who ran the wagon yard, breezed into the bar for his morning medicine.

"Mornin', Jeff," he huskily remarked. "Just thinkin' about you. Did I ever tell you about the time Pecos Bill drove a swarm of bees across the plains the time of the big snow?"

"Excuse me, Veracity," Jeff hastily explained, taking his drink in one bite, "in an awful rush. Gotta teach a mule manners down at the corral."

"Wait," roared Veracity, his whiskers bristling like an Airedale's. "I don't aim to be snubbed by no man that runs a mules' boardin' house."

"No, no, old man," Jeff apologized—Veracity was hard to handle when interrupted—"I ain't meanin' to high nose you, but you see that mule won't wait."

"Who in hell cares what a mule thinks?" thundered the old man, caressing the cedar handle of a forty-five tucked under his vest. Timid Jeff was about to surrender and lend ears to the yarn, when a welcome interruption came through the door. The newcomer was dressed like a boy scout, wore eye glasses and a recruit chin-whisker that might some day become a Van Dyke.

"Ah, Professor Roberts, you arrived in the nick of time," he said cheerfully. "Want you to meet a noted historian of the Old West, Mr. Veracity Updike. Veracity, the professor is a scientific sharp, a paleontologist. He digs up old bones. He's also hell-bent on hearing yarns about the Old West."

"Delighted, Mr. Updike," said the professor, beaming, "a historian, you say? I am indeed interested in the folk-lore of this amazing land. Will you join me in a morning libation?"

"Excuse me if I don't refuse." Veracity's face corrugated into a grin, as he drew up a chair to a table. Jeff Calhoun executed a strategic retreat.

"I must confess that I am sadly in need of stimulant," the professor confided, as he watered his whiskey and took a sampling sip. "My body is racked with pain and discolored with contusions."

"What racked it?" asked Veracity, inhaling his drink in a gulp.

"Why, I was foolish enough to allow myself to be tempted to a feat of athletic prowess yesterday," admitted the scientist. "A group of local cow-lads persuaded me to test my horsemanship. Riding buck jumpers, I believe it is called. I fear I have not learned the proper technique.

"Really I never dreamed that that little mustang could be such a strenuous demon. He was positively volcanic. Try as I might, I could not synchronize my movements to his. Three times I soared from the saddle, striking the ground with disconcerting force. I suspect that those cow-lads planned the contest deliberately for my discomfiture."

"Wouldn't put it past them hyenas," admitted Veracity. "Professor, how do you like our Western sport of ridin' buckin' horses?"

"Really, Mr. Updike, I can't say that I recommend it as a sport," the professor ruefully confided. "You see, the silly little animals bound and rebound and you simply can't remain."

"That's right. What does a bronc know about fair play," agreed Veracity. "Them punchers' idea of humor would make a horned toad blush. But shucks, them kids can't talk about ridin'. Not a real bronc-twister in the bunch. Hasn't been any real ridin' in this country since the days of Pecos Bill."

"Well, I'll seek no more laurels as a bronco breaker," declared the professor. "I am a man of science, and as such I have been successful. I have discovered

the fossil-remains of a new species of dinosaur, of the order of extinct mesozoic reptiles hitherto unclassified."

"Does that carload of big bones down on the railroad sidin' belong to you?" asked Veracity.

"Yes, indeed. It is a treasure trove that will make me famous," excitedly proclaimed the professor. "I am almost positive that some of those giant bones are mammalian."

"Course they are," Veracity blandly assented. "In fact I know all about them bones. I knew them bones when they was alive an' covered with meat and gallopin' over these mesas."

"Impossible," laughed the scientist. "Are you sure you gather my meaning? Do you know what a mammal is?"

"Course I do," the old reconteur snorted. "Didn't I get eddicated one winter when I had my leg broke. A mammal is a animal what hollers 'mammy' when it wants its supper. Ain't I right?"

"Well, perhaps, broadly speaking," the professor assented. "Your definition approaches the truth."

"Approaches the truth," Veracity growled. "It's better than the truth. Furthermore, when I was a runt of a kid, them mammy males were my friends. Often wondered what had become of their bones."

"You can't be serious," gasped the professor. "What species of mammals were these giant beasts?"

"Well, you know that biggest bone you got down there, the one nine feet long?" queried the old timer, gloating over his victim.

"My greatest prize," replied the man of science. "It is the femur of a giant dinosaur."

"You may be a paleon-what's-it, but you don't know bones," growled Veracity. "That very specimen is the thigh bone of Pecos Bill's old horse, Funeral Wagon. In my youth, I saw Bill ride him many a time.

"Just as true as I'm sittin' here waitin' for the next drink, I saw that horse rode the day he died—the only time he ever was rode by anybody exceptin' Pecos Bill. Old Bill of course, could ride anything from a jumpin' bean to a tornado.

"Naturally, horses was his favorite mount, and he had the greatest string of rip-snortin' outlaws ever seen west of the Pecos River. Of all his broncs, however, he had two that was the out-buckin'est hellions that ever bucked. They was Widow Maker, his top cuttin' horse, and Funeral Wagon. You can understand what a star-spangled heller old Funeral Wagon was, when I tell you that next to Widow Maker, he was the worst that ever throwed a puncher. Beyond that praise cannot go.

"In his lighter moments between massacres, when Pecos Bill wanted to amuse himself, he used to get up rodeos. In fact, he invented the rodeo.

"Well, one time when I was a little shaver about knee high to a puddle duck, I saw one of them rodeos. That was a show what was a show. After all the ordinary cow-lads got through bustin' broncs and bulldoggin' steers and buffalo, and ropin' and tiein' longhorns, old Bill gave an exhibition.

"He could do the little things as well as the big. First he'd rope about twenty wild buffalo bulls with one loop and hog-tie them without gettin' out of the saddle. Then he'd forefoot a centipede and tie all its thousand legs with a few deft half-hitches. You never seen such an agile man.

"Then he bull-dogged a few dinahsores, gentled them with a quirt, put halters on them, and broke them to pullin' a wagon. That man could do anything. Finally he led out old Funeral Wagon. The old cuss was gettin' along in years then. Thousands of the best cowboys had tried to fork him, but not one had lasted longer than the first jump.

"'Friends,' he hollers. 'You often

seen me ride this here horse. I ain't goin' to ride him today, but my son, Pecos Bull, is goin' to top him off. Little Bull is six years old today and it's time he was showin' that he can do a man's work.'

"Pecos Bill eared old Funeral Wagon down, and little Pecos Bull throwed the saddle on him and cinched him up. Strong men fainted at the idea of that young sprout darin' to climb that old terror, but Bull buckled on his spurs, tipped his hat to his mama, old Catastrophe Carrie, and throwed his leg over the saddle. Then his papa turned loose all holts and let that old imp of Satan do his worst.

"Stranger, you may think you've seed buckin' horses, but you ain't seen nothin'. Old Funeral Wagon started doin' cartwheels down the arena, then reversed himself and threw a lot of back handsprings, all the time roarin' and gnashin' his teeth. All the time he kept up that wrigglin' motion in his mid-section, like a limber snake on a hot stove.

"All the time he kept pawin' up the gravel till it fell like hailstones, and the dust was so thick you could rake it by handfuls out of the air. It was awesome to behold, but little Pecos Bull just sat up there poppin' the quirt into him and giggin' him with his spurs.

"Then that Funeral Wagon really got mad. Up he went, higher and higher, turnin' inside and outside loops, tail spins, figger eights and pinwheels. He finally jumped so high that little Bull had to duck his head to keep from bumpin' the sky.

"At last that old bronc realized that the impossible was happenin'. He was bein' rode. He put all he had into one last despairin' leap. It was more than equine nature could stand. About two thousand feet up he just naturally busted into a hundred pieces and scattered out in all directions.

"A mighty groan went up from the audience. Poor little Bull was left up there with nowhere to go but down. It was then that he proved that he was a true son of his father. Jauntily he threw his leg over the biggest piece and rode it down to the arena gracefully, bowin' to his friends in the grandstand.

"Hat in hand, the youngster went to his papa and mama, Pecos Bill and his true wife Catastrophe Carrie, who were sittin' on the fence beamin' with pride.

" 'Sorry I busted your horse, pappy,' he said shyly. 'I got a confession. Dad, I been feedin' that old hellion a bushel of dynamite every day for a week, just to make him cavort. I didn't think he'd be so touchy as to blow up thataway.'

" 'That's all right, my noble offspring,' roared Bill through his tears. 'I'd rather lose a hundred horses than to have you tell one lie.'

"SO YOU see, professor," said Veracity, pointing, with his empty glass, at the dazed scientist. "Them things you call dinahsore bones was nothin' but the remnants of old Funeral Wagon. I ought to know."

The professor waved an admonishing finger.

"Tut, tut, Mr. Updike," he chided. "You cannot expect me, a man of science, to believe such a tale. It taxes my credulity."

"What's that," roared the old man glaring in anger at his doubter. "Do you mean to trifle with your future by castin' slurs at the sacred memory of that noble hero, Pecos Bill."

Out of the corner of his eye the professor caught a glimpse of the bartender frantically signaling. And the gleam in old Veracity's eye spelled trouble.

"No, no," he said hastily. "I wouldn't dispute you for the world. As you say, you were an eye witness. Pray continue with the tale,—I mean history."

As if in a daze the professor sat in open-mouthed amazement. Weakly he waved his hand, the bartender per-

formed his function, old Veracity dunked his whiskers, filled his lungs, and went on with his monologue.

"Yes sir, it's lucky you met me before you went tellin' folks that them are dinahsore skelligans. You take them other bones, the ones that look like a wagon bow. Know what them are?"

"Why, why—I presumed they were the ribs of an unclassified marine reptile," replied the professor cautiously.

"Reptile my eye," snorted Veracity. "Them bones was once the ribs of a dog. Pecos Bill's personal pooch, what he named Hell Hound, calling him Helly for short. Trained him as a dinahsore retriever. Made me sad to see them last remains piled in that box car. Many a romp Helly and I had in the old days.

"You understand Pecos Bill trained little Helly, when he was a pup, to retrieve buffalo and such small game. When the dog got his growth, Bill taught him to carry in the dinahsores he shot. It was about that time he was cleanin' the reptilian monsters out of the Old West.

"Shot them, you say! Preposterous!" the professor was showing evidence of doubt. "Don't you know that the skin of a dinosaur would be impervious to bullets? It was a coat of armor."

"Maybe, for the piffling little popguns they use nowadays," Veracity agreed. "But you never saw Bill's gun. Say, did you hear about that big gun the Dutch used in the war in Flanders? The one they shot seventy miles into Paris. Big Bertha, they called it. Well, it's honest truth that was only Pecos Bill's old six shooter somebody loaned to the Germans. Shucks, old Bill could throw a rock harder and farther than most battleships can shoot."

Lulled into a sense of security by the bland smile of old Veracity, the professor made a weak protest.

"Come, come, my good man," he appealed. "Even your friend, Pecos, could not accomplish the impossible with firearms. After all, the law of ballistics are well known to science—"

"Stranger, you're biddin' for a hearse right now." The old man was a fury. Suddenly he whipped out a six shooter from under his vest, and waved it under the professor's nose. "You see that gun. Pecos Bill give me that, taught me how to use it. Remember there ain't no closed season on smart dudes in this country."

To the startled eye of the professor that gun looked as big as a howitzer.

"Please, please," he begged. "Such a display is really uncalled for. Why lose one's temper over a trifle?"

Old Veracity continued to tap the table nervously with the muzzle of his gun.

"Yes sir, Bill give me this very gun," he went on. "He was the quickest man on the draw that ever lived. Know how he trained himself. Used to practise shootin' at his shadow. Finally he got so fast he could beat his own shadow to the draw, and, stranger, that takes speed.

"A funny thing about that shadow of his. It didn't have a head."

"What, no head?" the professor started to protest, but thought better of it. "How odd. How do you explain that fact?"

"Well, it was this way," explained Veracity. "Bill shot that shadow so much he shot its head off. I used to feel sorry for that poor old shadow, follin' around Bill without any head.

"But we was talkin' about that dog, Hell Hound. One of Helly's favorite sports was chasin' the subterranean galihoot, a monster that used to infest these parts. It had a revolving mouth like a concrete mixer, forepaws like steam shovels, and a spiral tail. It didn't run, it bounced on powerful springs in its hind feet. They used to go boundin' around the scenery, eatin' up the deer and other useful meat animals, until Pecos Bill decided to exterminate them. It wasn't long until the galihoots found out

that here was a foe they could not cope with.

"It was the nature of the galihoot to dig holes. When frightened it would stick its face in the sand, start that revolvin' mouth, diggin' in with its steam shovel paws and tossin' the dirt out behind it with its spiral tail, and quicker than you could take a drink, that galihoot would be out of sight in the ground.

"That trick puzzled Pecos Bill for a time, but he figgered a way to beat it. He trained old Hell Hound to be a galihoot terrier. Helly was no slouch when it came to diggin' himself. He would run one of the monsters to earth, then tear into that hole after him, get a grip on that spiral tail and haul him out backwards. It was just a game to Helly.

"Bill sure exterminated all them terrible beasts. Today, no matter how far you may roam, never will you hear the hoot of the gallihoot, but this country is full of caves where they used to make their lairs. My land, how this country has changed since I was a gay young lad!

"It sure bogs me down in misery when I remember how poor old Helly met his demise. One time the railroad was makin' a concrete bridge and Helly happened on a pile of fresh mixed concrete, and danged if he didn't eat the whole mess. He was reckless that way. Always willin' to take a chance.

"Then the old dog laid down to take a snooze, and when he woke up he found that the core of his being was solid rock. He couldn't move and he couldn't eat, and that rock-ribbed old hound just died of immobility. Pecos Bill peeled the meat and bones off that concrete inside and set it up as a monument to his pet. He labeled it with a sign readin', 'Interior view of Hell Hound. Taken by himself.' Bill had a tender heart.

"You was talkin' about ridin' a spell back. Hell's bells and panther tracks, old Pecos Bill invented ridin'. He got so good that ordinary ridin' was just mild exercise to him. He'd rode all the outlaw broncs, wild bulls, dinahsores, chuckle lions, cyclones, earthquakes and such things, until there seemed nothin' left to try his mettle.

"THEN one day a gamblin' fool from Cripple Creek bet him a million pesos that he couldn't ride a whale. Pecos Bill took him up and as a side wager bet that gambler a punch in the eye, and let him hold the stakes himself, just to be fair. All the Old West was het up about it and millions was put up on the contest. Just to show how folks admired Bill he was a two to one favorite against the whale.

"No ocean was barred and all the jolly whale-boys went sailin' around lookin' for a bull whale big enough to put up a fight. At last Miss Luck smiled on Bill. From the Gulf of California a homing eagle brought word that the biggest whale that ever stove a boat was grounded in shallow water at the mouth of the Colorado River.

"Escorted by half the cow-pokes west of the Pecos River, old Bill stepped on Widow Maker and galloped to the scene. Sure enough there was that bull behemoth bogged down in forty feet of water. Bill announced that he would ride him slick without a saddle, but he made a bridle with an engine shaft for a bit and an anchor chain for reins.

"That whale sure kicked up a fuss when he went to bridle him, but Bill flanked him down and stuck his head in the bridle. You see this wasn't just an ordinary whale. It was the one that had swallowed Jonah, the fellow that got publicity in the Bible. The way Bill found that out later was when he discovered a lot of inscriptions carved in the linin' of the whale's stommick. Jonah had taken his pocket knife and engraved mottos like, 'Still Singin' the Prisoner's Song, Jonah, 2000 B.C.' and

'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' and 'Dark is the Night.' Jonah must have been keen of wits, a jolly old morsel.

"Finally, just as a tidal wave lifted that whale's belly from the sand, Pecos Bill stepped on him, and with a loud whoop dug his spurs in its neck. Man hush, never before or since have I seen anything like it. That old whale let a bellow that was heard around the world. He spouted water five thousand feet high, threw himself in high gear, and headed for the briny deep.

"As he ploughed through the water, he turned up waves that washed the mountains down along the Gulf of California, but he didn't begin his real buckin' until he got out into the bosom of the Pacific Ocean. Then he turned on the works. He'd heave himself a thousand feet out of the water, turn a few flip-flops, come zig-zaggin' down like a fallin' leaf, light on his tail and go piroutin' across the stormy sea like a giant dirigible with the jitters.

"Old Bill just sat up there, fannin' himself with his hat, and singin' a sea chanty called 'Merrily We Roll Along.' It was a weird sight. I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen it myself. You see I was one of the spectators, trailin' along, ridin' a little porpoise.

"For hours that cantankerous old cachalot strutted his stuff, but at last he knew he was licked. He was bein' rode by a man what knew how to ride. But that old whale had a trick up his sleeve. When he found he couldn't throw Bill fair, he played a dirty trick. He headed for a hole in the ocean about five miles deep, and dived. Down he went to the bottom of the sea until he rested on the nethermost rocks.

"Things looked mighty blue for Pecos Bill. He never was strong for water, and down there five miles under he was sort of out of his element. He had to think fast or drown, but as usual he figgered a way out. Jerkin' out his pistol he fired a shot straight up. The bullet made a hole in the water clear up to the sky, and old foxy Bill breathed through the hole. That just naturally broke the whale's spirit. He never was the same monster again.

"With a bitter sigh he gave up the fight and came floatin' to the top. Reinin' him right and left, puttin' him through his paces, Bill steered him to shore, put a halter on him and tied him to a mountain.

"That old whale became as tame as a kitten after that. Bill used him for a whale horse. Many the time I've seen him sky hootin' across the sea, rounded up a school of whales, and drivin' them into the blubber market. What a man he was!"

"Pardon me," murmured the dumfounded professor. "You say you actually knew this super being?"

"Well, I admit I didn't know him at his best," admitted Veracity. "He was gettin' kind of old when I was a kid, and them stunts I was tellin' you about was just the playfulness of second childhood.

"When I was a little runt, old Bill hired me to gather scorpions, centipedes and vinagaroons, for him. Used to pay me two bits a bucket for them pizzonous insects. He always put a handful in his whiskey, just to give it a flavor. Speakin' of whiskey, did I hear you—"

"Oh, yes, indeed, yes." The professor came out of his daze. "Will you join me in another libation?"

"Excuse me," Veracity grinned, "if I don't refuse. And here's to science and truth."

LIFE ON A HELL SHIP

By CAPTAIN WILLIAM ALFORD

THE forecastle of the three-masted barque *Salome*, of London, England, was filthy, wet, verminous and rat-ridden—the right place to breed a mutiny. Night after night we lay in our soaking clothes, groaning and cursing at the agony caused by sea boils on our emaciated bodies being rubbed raw, and bruised and battered by contact with the sides and bottoms of our berths at every roll of the heavily laboring ship.

The barque was bound for Talcahuano, Chile, from Newcastle, Australia, and during the last fifty days of the voyage she encountered terrific storms. During those fifty days we of the forecastle had not a single dry rag to wear, nor any chance to obtain any. During our watches below decks we turned into our berths in wet clothing, and crawled out of them in the same condition.

Desperate from having had to endure such conditions, which a tyrannical captain made no effort to ameliorate, upon arrival at Talcahuano we trooped aft in a body, and asked permission of the captain to lay our case before the British consul, giving as our reasons the poor condition of the food served us, the inhuman treatment we had been compelled to endure, and the general unseaworthiness of the ship.

Instead of granting our request to be set ashore, Captain U——y sent for the British consul to come aboard. Later, we were all called down to the cabin to make our complaint. Unfortunately the spokesman we had chosen was an illiterate, violent man, one of the worst type

found at sea; and he interspersed his request with so many oaths and such obscene remarks about the officers that the consul shut him up.

After hearing two others, the consul referred us to the ship's articles which we had signed, and declared that we had not substantiated our complaints of insufficient food, bad living conditions, and unseaworthiness of the ship. We cursed the consul and the captain up and down, and swore that we would not work the ship out of Talcahuano.

The consul went ashore, and a couple of hours later a boat came out to the ship, and the mate put his head inside the forecastle and ordered all who wanted to go ashore to get into the boat. I warned my shipmates that they were probably stepping into a trap, for I had had other experiences on the Chilean coast, and had witnessed the brutality of the Chilean police toward deepwater seamen.

Ignoring my warning, and desiring only to get a chance to "jump ship" or desert, all but myself got into the boat. At the dock she was met by the entire Talcahuano police force. They at once marched the crew up to the *cuartel*—jail—where each man had his wrists shackled to his ankles by a chain. Then he was knocked down and his feet were shackled to an elevated horizontal bar. There they lay from 2 P. M. until 9 A. M. the next morning.

Then they were marched through the town back to the dock, still shackled hands to feet. At the boat they were met by a brutal native pilot, who kicked, pushed and punched the shackled and helpless men into the boat, so that they lay piled on top of one another in the bottom. If a man attempted to shift his position, the pilot immediately quieted him by a blow from the tiller.

In the boat also were ten Chilote Indians who had been engaged by the pilot to heave anchor and set sail.

When the boat arrived alongside the barque I was aloft, loosening the sails on the main mast, and I had a good opportunity to witness the further mistreatment of my shipmates. Each man was hoisted up by a boat tackle, and then dropped from a height of about six feet. Some of them landed on their heads and were knocked unconscious.

Manhandled by the Chilote Indians, each sailor was shackled to a stanchion or a ringbolt, and not until then were the police shackles removed. Then the Chilote Indians hove the anchors and set the sails, while I remained aloft to overhaul the buntlines and downhaul them. Then I was ordered to take the wheel, and the pilot and the Indians went ashore.

The crew finally agreed to turn to, but later, in the forecastle, we considered all kinds of schemes by which to desert in Tocopilla, the saltpeter port for which the barque was now bound. But the captain determined to keep us on the ship until she had discharged the 3000 tons of coal she carried, and thereby save stevedore charges.

On the second night after the ship dropped her hook off Tocopilla, two Norwegians and I lowered a boat shortly after midnight. Just as we got the boat clear of the ship's side someone on the barque fired three shots, and we knew that we were discovered.

Immediately lights flashed up ashore and we heard excited voices. Not wishing to have any contact with the Chilean authorities after what I had seen at Talcahuano, I slipped over the stern of the boat and swam beside her, calling upon the two Norwegians to follow my example and head for the interior with me. But they decided to take a chance with the authorities.

I landed some distance below the boat dock, and sat down to wring the water out of my shoes and socks in the darkness. While I was sitting there, two mounted policemen passed within a few yards of me. Each policeman had one of the Norwegian sailors handcuffed to a

stirrup. That was the last I ever saw of my two shipmates.

For hours I lay "doggo" in the darkness, but just as dawn was breaking I made my way along the shore. By sunrise I was on top of the pampa which rises several thousand feet behind Tocopilla.

Having a few dollars in my possession, in Chilean money, I was able to purchase a cup of coffee and some rolls at a tiny cantina. Then I started on my way north toward Iquique. The first day I walked until I had to stop and rest from sheer exhaustion, ever in my thoughts the fear of being returned to the hell ship by the brutal Chilean police.

I reached Iquique after walking over a hundred miles over the pampa, where the saltpeter mines were located. Arriving at Iquique, I went to John Harvey's sailors' boarding house. Harvey welcomed me, gave me a drink or two and fed me; then he told me that as soon as I was rested up a bit, I could take my choice of half a dozen ships that were nearly loaded, and needed men.

Noticing that I was almost in rags, Harvey said he would fix me up with clothes, which he did, and I stayed a week in the house. Then he told me that he had a good ship for me, and took me, with nine other sailors, to the British consul's office, where we signed the ship's articles. Each of us was given a month's wages, twenty dollars, as an advance, and we were ordered to be aboard the towboat that evening, which would take us to Pisagua, where the ship was lying at anchor, already loaded with saltpeter, consigned to Leith, Scotland.

I later learned that John Harvey, the boarding house keeper in Iquique, received fifty dollars blood money for each of the sailors he procured for this ship, in addition to the month's advance each of us had to pay him.

After leaving the office of the British consul, the boarding house keeper took us all to a saloon and treated us to drinks. Then we returned to the boarding house with him. There, he gave me a fine big canvas sea bag of clothing, and handed me a bottle of Scotch, which he told me to take along with me. I wrapped it in a new shirt and put the shirt inside a new leather sea boot, then tied the lanyard and finished it up with a thief's knot.

Later, we all returned to the saloon and John Harvey stood the drinks for the crowd until we were conducted to the towboat, which immediately shoved off for Pisagua, which is about sixty miles north of Iquique.

WE FOUND the ship to be another three-masted barque, which I will call the *Albatross*, and the brutal treatment we received on her beggars description.

We boarded her at daylight, and at once the mate ordered us to heave the anchor; but a powerful seaman who went by the name of Tex asked the mate if we might have a bite to eat and a cup of coffee first. The mate conceded to the request in a surly manner, and we consumed bread and coffee on the main hatch. Then, under the mate's eyes, we carried our sea bags into the forecastle, and then went up to heave anchor. While we were walking the capstan, the captain strolled up and stood watching us.

Captain "Jones" was a little man with white whiskers and snaky eyes, and apparently he was close to seventy years old. Chief Mate Mr. K—— was a big, overbearing man of forty, with sandy hair and mustache. The second mate, Mr. T——, was a misplaced gentleman, and as I afterward learned, an Oxford graduate. There were three apprentice boys, aged from fourteen to sixteen.

There was also the steward, a big, powerful brute whose cauliflowered ears and flattened nose hinted of the prize ring. He seemed to take a delight in posing around the decks, as if trying to impress the sailors as to what would

happen to them if they should dare to kick about the food.

After we had both anchors lashed, all sails set with lines coiled for running, and the decks cleared up, it was time for dinner. So I made a bee line to my sea bag, intending to take a shot of Scotch. But when I opened my bag there was nothing in it but yards upon yards of ragged lace curtains! John Harvey, the boarding house keeper in Iquique, had had this done while I was drinking with him in the saloon! There I was at sea, and bound around Cape Horn without a stitch of clothing save the thin dungaree suit that I was wearing!

The ship was making very little headway, although a moderate southerly wind was blowing; for she had not been dry-docked since leaving England about two and a half years previously. When she rolled, great clusters of goose-neck barnacles could be observed below the water line; also sea grass about two feet in length.

We were turned-to during the afternoon, getting the vessel ship-shape for the passage around the Horn, and at 5 P. M. we went to the galley for our supper. The steward handed us a tin kid, with ten sea biscuits and a pot of tea. We took the food into the forecastle and sat down to eat, but the hard-tack was so full of white maggots, or weevils, that we could not stomach it, and the tea was black as ink and tasted like tannic acid.

Also, we found in the forecastle, where the steward had placed it in lieu of our weekly ration of butter and sugar, a tin of bilge honey—in this case, black molasses—full of dead insects.

We looked at the mess, then looked at one another, considering the hard day's work we had done.

While we were trying to decide what to do about it, Tex rose to his feet and offered to lead the way aft and present the matter before the captain.

Evidently the captain had been expecting us, for he had called the powerful, broken-nosed steward to stand by in case of trouble. The captain and the steward met us on the poop, and as the captain demanded what we wanted, Tex had three sailors set the hard-tack, the poisonous tea and the tin of bilge honey at the captain's feet.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Tex, "but we have done a hard day's work, and such food as this is not fit for a pig to eat."

At once the big steward doubled his fists and made a rush toward Tex, whereupon Tex picked up the tin of bilge honey and slammed it squarely in the steward's face. The sharp edge of the opened tin cut a complete circle around the steward's eyes, nose and mouth, and a seaman named Tom, who was at the wheel, seized an ironwood belaying pin from the rail and brought it down with a whack on the right shoulder of the steward, knocking him headlong to the deck.

Staggering to his feet, the steward left the poop, with blood streaming from his face and his right arm hanging useless at his side, while the little, white-whiskered captain stood looking at us like a man who had burned his bridges behind him. For he had relied upon the ex-prizefighter to subdue us.

Calling upon diplomacy to aid him, the captain now adopted a conciliatory manner, and explained that he had left the ordering of the ship's stores entirely to the steward, and that he would see that no more such food was served us. Then he took us below and handed us twenty cabin hard-tack. Thinking to take advantage of the situation, I told him about how the boarding house keeper had robbed my sea bag, and asked him if I might have some clothing from the slop chest, in which a ship's captain is compelled by law to keep a complete outfit for every man aboard. But to my dismay, and to that of all of us, the captain said that the slop chest was empty!

NEXT day the mate put a boy in the galley to do the steward's work, and the apprentice told us that he wished he could stay there. The food became eatable, but we guessed that this would not long be the case, and we waited expectantly to see what would happen when the steward recovered sufficiently to get back to his job.

The manner in which Tex had achieved results for us caused us to appoint him our leader, though nothing was said about it in words. The admiration of the forecastle hands for the tall Texan sailor, and for another seaman, an Australian, Jim, was unanimous. I am not saying that what afterward happened was right; maybe it verged on mutiny, but we were driven to it by the continued mistreatment we had received on ship after ship, and in port after port. We made up our minds to stick by Tex and Australian Jim in whatever they decided to do.

None of the officers knew that Tex had brought two revolvers aboard, and that after the trouble with the steward he carried one of the weapons in a shoulder holster beneath his jumper. The other revolver Tex had given to Jim, with the advice always to carry it, and to be on his guard against the big steward.

One day I said to Tex and Australian Jim that during thirty years at sea I had never before seen a sailor carry a gun. Tex shot me a swift glance, and then replied in his soft, Southern drawl:

"Back where I come from 'most every man packs a gun, and we ain't got half the number of bad *hombres* there are on this ship."

About two weeks after the row on the poop the steward turned to again, and I could see the hatred in his eyes when they rested on the tall Texan sailor. It was quite evident that the steward was laying for Tex, but was afraid to start anything lest the entire forecastle crew jump him.

Often the steward, with his ugly features permanently disfigured by the scar left by the tin of bilge honey, might have been seen, stripped to the waist, abaft the main mast, swinging Indian clubs. His muscular development was abnormally powerful, and he was nearly six feet six inches in height; a perfectly built giant who weighed about two hundred and thirty pounds.

After the return of the steward to the galley the food grew steadily worse, and while rounding the Horn scurvy made its appearance among us. A Swedish sailor died of the disease, and all of us were more or less afflicted by it. Our flesh became soft as putty, our gums turned black, and we began to lose our teeth.

We stood it as long as we could; then we asked the captain to put in at the Island of St. Helena, where he might obtain some anti-scorbutics, fresh fruit and vegetables; but he said that it was impossible, for the ship was about as inanimate as a log on account of the immense amount of barnacles and sea grass attached to her hull, and for days she had been drifting with the currents away from the island.

The day we buried the Swedish sailor at sea, all hands got together in the forecastle to discuss our situation, and the mate entered, and told me to go up on the main yard to seize the outer starboard buntline block to the jackstay.

I had started toward the bosun locker to get a marlin spike and some wire seizing when Tex joined me and reminded me that it was time for the steward to come aft into the galley, which was just forward of the main mast.

"Here's your chance to get rid of that ——, Bill," said Tex. "How about it?"

I knew what Tex meant. I nodded. Choosing a heavy, sharp-pointed marlin spike, I hurried aloft.

"When you holler, we'll all be with you," said Tex. "Get him." Then he returned to the forecastle.

While I was working on the main yard, the steward came along the deck. Just

as he passed beneath me, I shouted, "Under below!" and let the marlin spike fall. It missed the steward, but my yell brought all hands on deck, and they piled into the steward with belaying pins and beat him up until he lay unconscious.

By that time I had joined my shipmates. When the steward recovered consciousness, he was promptly knocked unconscious again.

The captain and both mates had been watching from the break of the poop, but they made no attempt to interfere. The captain had both hands in his pockets, and we strongly suspected that he had guns, but was afraid to use them.

At an order from Tex we went aft onto the poop, with Tex in the lead. With a quick movement he pinned the captain's arms to his sides and faced him outboard. Australian Jim relieved the captain of a pair of revolvers, which he handed to two sailors.

Then Tex started to dress down the captain in plain English, calling him a coward and every foul name to which he could lay his tongue. And the captain took it without a word!

With four revolvers in possession of the forecastle hands, we felt that we could make ourselves heard, and we warned the officers that we would hang one of them to a yard arm for every sailor who died from inhuman treatment and lack of proper food.

The captain and the mates took it. They did not try to make any trouble, and a week later, when we spoke a steamship—no complaints were made against us. The captain arranged so that a generous supply of fresh fruits and vegetables was brought aboard.

Tex immediately routed out the steward, with the admonition that if he valued his life he would start cooking for us and feeding us as seamen should be fed, otherwise he would be keel-hauled until the last breath had left his body. So he went to work and cooked us the first decent meal we had eaten in one hundred and forty days!

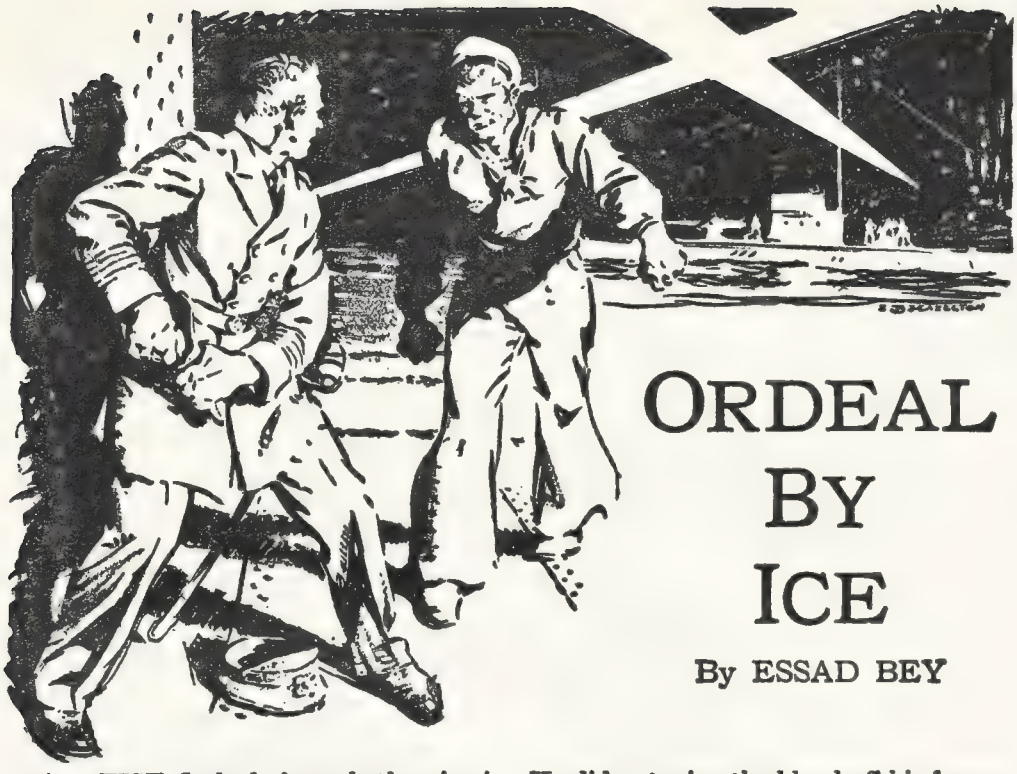
We soon recovered our health, but if the steward thought we had forgotten the way he had treated us he found himself badly mistaken.

One day, when almost within sight of land, the steward, now fully recovered, was on the forecastle head scanning the horizon for land, when the mate sent Tex and me to sweat taut a jib sheet. Noticing the steward, the mate ordered him to lend a hand.

I had hold of the turn around the cleat, and I gave Tex the wink, meaning that I intended to let it go. Tex winked back in understanding.

An instant before they were to put their weights on it, I suddenly let go, and it threw the steward up into the air and caught his left hand in the sheet block. It had been our intention to hurl him overboard, but he hung in the air by his left hand, which was foul with the sheet block. The flapping of the sail released him, and Tex and I stood waiting. The steward slunk off toward his galley like a whipped cur and that was the last trouble we had with the prize-fighting steward of the *Albatross*.

We made port on the 183rd day out from Pisagua, Chile, and tied up to the Pier o' Leith, Scotland. Next day we were paid off. Nothing was said about our mutinous conduct by the captain, and for our own part we could not afford to enter any complaint. Tex, Australian Jim and I went to Cardiff, Wales, stayed two weeks in a sailors' boarding house in the district known as Tiger Bay; and then together we signed on as able seamen aboard the three-masted wooden barque, *Glen Grant*, of Liverpool.



ORDEAL BY ICE

By ESSAD BEY

A FIST flashed through the air. A thin trickle of blood ran slowly down from the corner of the sailor's mouth. His lean white face became a shade more pallid and his gray eyes seemed to sink deeper under their bushy brows.

Captain Pogorelsky stood on the deck of his submarine. In a hoarse voice he shouted choice Russian abuse:

"Cur, snake, swine!"

The sailors of Russia's submarine flotilla looked on at the scene in apathy from the neighboring vessels. Beatings on Pogorelsky's ship afforded no particular sensation. They occurred daily. A dirty gun, a clumsily executed maneuver, were enough to drive the captain into one of his outbursts.

Pogorelsky stood before the sailor he had struck.

"Samoilow," he roared, "I've been beating you up for ten years. And I'm going to beat you up for another ten or more until you're a real sailor!"

Samoilow looked past his commander. He did not wipe the blood off his face as it flowed down his chin in a tiny rivulet. But he also made no excuse for the fault he had committed. Like Pogorelsky, he was a tall man with the same clear eyes and straight, fair hair. The physical similarity between the two was strikingly apparent. But it began and stopped there. Nature, it seemed, had created two likenesses, one plebeian and unkempt, the other sleek and aristocratic.

The two men made no effort to conceal their mutual dislike. Pogorelsky spat and strode around the deck. He was in the habit of beating Samoilow every day. He had known the man for ten years. In the village of Pogoreloe, in distant Russia, the officer had been the landed proprietor and the sailor a mere peasant. The peasant's grandfather had been a serf of Pogorelsky's grandfather.

Pogorelsky had heard but refused to credit an old story which was current in their native village. Samoilow listened to the tale from his mother's own lips. With hard, bright eyes she told how she

had been whisked one night into the proprietor's house. It was not for her husband to complain. His body quivering with rage, he watched her carried out helpless and beaten. . . .

But the peasant woman's son was not looked upon as the son of the proprietor. He remained a serf in the house of a serf.

Pogorelsky's father was Samoilow's father, whispered the villagers to one another.

"Pogorelsky and Samoilow are like brothers," the peasants secretly laughed and gossiped.

"But," one muttered ominously, "Samoilow hates the blue blood of our landlord's son. It is his own blood as well."

"Little difference that makes," replied another. "He works in the fields as long as anyone else."

"He hates Pogorelsky, yes," an old patriarch interrupted slowly. "But he does not hate him because he is Pogorelsky. He hates him because Pogorelsky dresses so richly, because Samoilow must pay him tribute, because he drives a fine carriage while he must work out his life in the wheat fields."

Then revolution raged through Russia in 1905. The peasants descended upon the Pogorelsky manor house, smashed the fences and set it afire. The serf, Samoilow, carried the red, flaring torch which sent the feudal estate up in flames. Pogorelsky had reason enough to let the sailor feel the sting of his spite.

Captain Pogorelsky left the vessel. With the self-assured swagger of an officer, he walked through the narrow streets of Hangoe. In the small building that housed the officers' club, his colleagues awaited him. There he could really unburden himself.

"It drives a gentleman to despair!" he cried. "My crew is an agglomeration of the lowest, hard-boiled scum of all Russia! They belong in Siberia, not in the Imperial Navy. One is a king of pickpockets, another a murderer. The third I've got to chastise just because of his impudent mug."

The other officers nodded their heads gravely in assent. In 1914 they had not yet recovered from the horror of 1905. Great engagements were not to be looked for in the Baltic. The perpetual monotony of life in port and the unchanging routine of the days tended to break down the strict discipline of the war years.

Pogorelsky was the most efficient officer of the Czar's whole Baltic fleet. Therefore they shipped to him the craftiest, toughest scoundrels. He was the only man who could whip them into sailors.

While Pogorelsky, over a glass of vodka, was waxing eloquent about his difficulties, the most calloused criminals in all Russia were sitting in the cramped forecastle of the submarine. Here were no officers, no beatings, no hatred.

Samoilow was talking.

"It's the fourth year of this damned war," he said, with a dull light in his eyes. "They sock us all the time. What in hell for? Nobody knows. If this war were not on—" he growled, leaving the sentence unfinished for the time being.

"Now, friend," said another sailor with a scar running down the entire left side of his face, "we don't know much about this war. We've become harbor rats, that's what."

"The officers and gentlemen are afraid to fight," sneered a third.

"In 1905 the Czar let our whole fleet get licked in the war against Japan," Samoilow smiled grimly. "It was a good year, 1905. There are still people who remember the Potemkin and the death gurgles of the officers—" He imitated the choking of a drowning man. "At that time peasants had no arms. But now our good Czar has armed us."

"Pogorelsky mauled you again today," one of the sailors interrupted. "That's why you're so mad."

"I've got nothing against an occasional punch," Samoilow replied. "But it's this

being knocked around all the time that gets me. Pogorelsky's a capable devil who knows his business and is the proprietor of my village. But for all that, it'll be a great day when I pitch the damned swine overboard."

THE rays of the setting sun streamed in blood-red glory over the swells of the Gulf of Finland. A cold wind blew. Somewhere high in the air telegraph wires were stretched. In the radio rooms of submarines, armored cruisers and destroyers, sat sailors bowed over brass keys and a crackling instrument. Staccato news appeared in Morse code on the interminable strips of paper:

"Our troops have taken one thousand Austrian prisoners."

"The Czar has bestowed the order of Saint George on General Zichow."

"The Secretary of the Navy expects shortly to make a visit of inspection to the fleet."

The wireless operators listlessly wrote down the dispatches.

In Pogorelsky's submarine, Samoilow sat of the floor of the wireless room smoking a cigarette. The smoke curled up around the lamp over the clicking instrument. His bosom friend sat cross-legged and apathetic, jotting down the innocuous messages. Lazily the wreaths of smoke played around his hand.

Suddenly, a glavanic shock jerked him into attention. The bored look vanished from his face. Swiftly, his fingers translated the dots and dashes of the code. Samoilow stiffened into surprised attention, the cigarette poised in the air midway between his mouth and his upraised knee.

"Listen," the operator exclaimed hoarsely to him, "something's going on in St. Petersburg! The people are in revolt, but the soldiers will not fire on them."

Samoilow jumped up and bent over the table. In the shadowy room he looked like a huge bird of prey. His hand gripped the table savagely, his eyes were gleaming coals in his head as they clung fixedly to the words being written out before him by his chum. His body was a long line of rigid, tensed muscle.

Back in the officers' house on shore, consternation reigned. Feverishly clustered around the wireless instrument, the officers in immaculate uniforms watched the fingers of the operator, the fingers that wrote the words of fate. Pogorelsky was the first to act.

"I'm going back to the ship!" he cried. "I'll get those dogs locked in their quarters!"

He banged the door behind him.

In the submarine, Samoilow burst in on the crew.

"Comrades!" he shouted. "Something's going on in St. Petersburg. Come on!"

The sailors leaped up, their eyes aflame. Quickly, they swarmed up on deck. There Pogorelsky confronted them, together with the other officers of the ship.

"Back! All of you!" he snarled at them. "Dispatches are none of your business. They are for the officers. Back to the forecastle!"

He swore at them savagely.

"Comrades," yelled Samoilow, his clenched fist in the air. "Don't let him frighten you! Don't let him betray you! We want to know the facts!"

At his words the sailors became more menacing. Bowed heads, stooped shoulders, stiffened into threatening erectness. Faces flushed with a new animation. Pogorelsky and the officers backed into a corner for a hurried consultation.

"Don't antagonize them," implored an officer of Pogorelsky, "or they'll pitch us all overboard. Let's wait for the news."

Minutes passed. Searchlights cleft the darkness. At the entrance to the wireless operator's cabin Samoilow squatted all ears for the tidings that came crackling over the ether.

Pogorelsky looked up into the dark sky. Years had passed, and he had suc-

ceeded in turning this band of cut-throats into sailors. It was not his fault if the fleet had been rewarded with no victories. In his submarine he had often emerged victorious from an encounter. He was hardly responsible for the incompetence of others. But he, too, waited tensely for the news from St. Petersburg.

Who was at the head of the government there concerned him very little. He knew only that Samoilow, his chief aversion, was once more bearing aloft the flaring torch. But this time more was at stake. It was not a question of setting fire to the manor house in a distant village. The spark of this fire might set off a conflagration among the entire Baltic Fleet.

A muffled shout from below broke the stillness. Samoilow slammed the door to the wireless operator's cabin and rushed up to the deck.

"Brother!" he shouted hoarsely. "The Czar has abdicated!"

At the same moment Pogorelsky stepped forward. Without a moment's hesitation Samoilow's heavy sailor's fist, with all the pent-up fury and hate, smashed into the officer's face.

"Bloodsucker!" he roared. "Your time's up. There are no more Czars!"

POGORELSKY snatched at his holster. Before he could grasp his gun, Samoilow seized him by the legs. Pogorelsky saw the dazzling beam of the searchlights. Then the icy waters of the sea closed over his head. Even while he was falling, he could hear the frenzied cry of the sailors:

"Strike the swine down!"

Samoilow ran through the vessel. Picking up a powerful flash, he signaled the tremendous news to the neighboring ships. Then, at the head of the crew, he swooped down upon the officers, huddled together on the deck.

"You've drunk our blood long enough!" he shrieked. "Now it's our turn. We'll drink yours!"

Suddenly he turned to the other sailors. "Bring some sacks!"

The sailors obeyed this leader so precipitately arisen from their ranks. Sacks were brought. The pinioned officers were dragged up on the deck, stretched at full length, on the smooth planks.

Samoilow, armed with a heavy cudgel, struck through the rows of bound officers. With his own hands, he beat every one of his victims. Soon their bodies were nothing but masses of bloody pulp. Bestial cries of triumphant revenge, timed to the stroke of the cudgel, snarled from the sailor's throats.

"That's that," said Samoilow, throwing down the cudgel, and rubbing his arm.

The officers were shoved into the sacks. A few minutes later there resounded a series of dull splashes in the water, and then silence.

"On shore!" cried Samoilow. "We haven't cleaned up all the filth yet!"

An enormous crowd of sailors thronged through the streets of the harbor. Similar scenes had taken place aboard all the ships. Everywhere officers had been beaten, thrust into sacks, and hurled overboard to drown. But there were still officers left ashore. Like wild beasts blind with the lust of blood, the horde of sailors poured through the town in pursuit of them.

Lights were still burning in the building which housed the naval staff. Admiral Nepenin, the commander, a gray-bearded man in his seventies, had just heard the news of the outbreak of the revolution. As yet he knew nothing of the sailors' revolt. He rose from his seat in alarm and said to his orderly:

"I must go ashore. I must find out how the men are taking it!"

Leaning on his cane, the old man left the house and walked slowly through the streets.

"Halt!" the single word exploded in the night. "Who are you?"

Samoilow peered into the admiral's face, his own distorted by hate.

Nepenin looked up in amazement.

"Admiral Nepenin," he replied. "Don't you know me, you fool?"

They were the old man's last words. At the same instant the sailor's powerful fist ripped the gold epaulettes from his shoulders. A Finnish dagger glittered in the darkness. The high ranking admiral of the Baltic fleet slumped to the ground, splattered with blood. Calmly, Samoilow wiped his dagger and strode on.

Most of the officers of the Baltic Fleet were murdered that night. Only a few succeeded in escaping. Among them was Pogorelsky. Drenched to the skin by his swim through the icy waters of the Gulf of Finland, he had slipped away.

The same night the frenzied sailors elected Samoilow captain of the submarine. The new government confirmed their choice by wireless.

"Well, comrades," Samoilow declared, early the next morning, "now the boat's ours. If we want to, we'll go on with the war. If we don't want to, we can go home. But I think it's better to stay on board in order to defend the revolution."

He stretched and spat—the image of Pogorelsky. Standing on the bridge, he resembled his commander even more. Looking at him from behind, there was not a noticeable physical difference.

He took out a pocket mirror, looked at his reflection and grinned. It actually was the same mold of human being standing there on the bridge. The same village was represented by its two most doughty sons on that boat. Both knew how to use their fists, how to command. And in both of them seethed the same heavy Slavic blood.

The sailors spent the entire morning in complete and lazy idleness. The new captain lounged around the deck smoking and playing cards.

LATER in the afternoon Samoilow descended to the engine room and stood perplexed in front of the complicated machinery of the submarine.

He shouted up for the engine room crew.

"How do you start the damned thing?" he asked them.

"We only know our engines," was the reply.

"How about you?" Samoilow turned to the helmsman.

"Well, I can steer all right."

"Well, then we'll try it," he said.

Slowly, carefully, he began to manipulate the machinery. With jerks and creaks the boat started to move.

"What others can do, I can, too," Samoilow declared.

Loyal to the orders of the new government, the submarine put out to sea. Close by steamed the other vessels of the submarine flotilla, each with its proud commander.

The trial trip lasted for several hours and was enough to whip into frenzy even Samoilow's hardy peasant nerves. Near him the Submarine Ag15 was cutting through the swells under the fluttering red flag of the revolution.

"Dive," Samoilow shouted across the water with a megaphone. "Show what you can do!"

The submarine clumsily obeyed orders. Slowly it started to submerge. Samoilow suddenly yelled like a madman. The revolutionary sailors were going to certain death. They had forgotten the simplest rule of submersion. The conning tower had not been closed. Waves flooded the interior of the submarine and pressed it to the sea floor. The vessel, with its entire crew, sank before the eyes of the combined fleet.

"Home!" roared Samoilow. "You're a pack of idiots! All of you!"

When they reached the harbor, Samoilow went ashore and strode furiously through the streets, spitting and grum-

bling. Finally, he addressed himself to the ultimate solution—an enormous flask of vodka. Through the mists of alcohol, wild pictures took form in his brain. He, the revolutionary sailor, was obviously incapable of commanding the submarine.

"To hell with that!" he thought. "That wouldn't be half so bad. A man could learn how to run the damned thing if he only had the time."

But there was no time.

At any moment the funnels of German destroyers might be appearing on the horizon. And then, it would be all over with the splendid revolution.

Samoilow was convinced that the Germans would hang every mother's son of them. They wouldn't tolerate Bolsheviks.

"Peace hasn't been signed yet. We've got to hold out one way or another until it is."

He went, unsteadily, back to the ship. The sailors—murderers, drunkards and thieves, the most hard-boiled rats in the whole fleet—surrounded him, perplexity written large on their faces.

"If Pogorelsky were here—" one of them muttered, and stopped, embarrassed and afraid. Nobody followed up the remark.

"Sure, if he were here," Samoilow said with a drunken yawn.

There was another silence.

Then—

"You can have Pogorelsky," announced a sailor with a low forehead and a drunkard's face.

Samoilow lifted his sunken head in surprise.

"That swine has the devil's own luck!" the sailor continued. "He's been seen around the harbor. Drunk as a lord in a saloon. We can make him teach us to run the boat before slitting his throat."

Samoilow lurched to his feet abruptly. He did not know whether he was angry or relieved.

"Talk it over later," he mumbled, and retired to his cabin, the cabin of Pogorelsky, to drown his perplexity in vodka ransacked from the stores. Somehow in his drunken stupor his mind worked. Then he dozed off. When he awoke, he rubbed his eyes with hard fists and muttered to himself.

"All right! We'll get him! We'll go get Pogorelsky!"

Accompanied by a few sailors, he set off for a tour of the dives in the harbor port. They entered one of the most disreputable. Pogorelsky sat brooding at a small table in the corner. He still wore his epaulettes, cockade and full uniform. He did not shrink back in terror. Raising his head, he regarded the sailors courageously with a defiant contemptuous look in his eyes. They closed in around the table. Samoilow was their spokesman.

"Comrade Pogorelsky," he said, "we order you in the name of the Revolution to take over the technical direction of the submarines."

Pogorelsky appeared not to hear his words. Suddenly he spat and almost split the table with his fist.

"I'm no comrade!" he shouted. "I'm your Excellency, or else I can't hear you."

Samoilow wavered.

"Well, your Excellency, are you coming back to the ship with us, or not?"

"You're a pack of swine, dogs and villains!" Pogorelsky lashed out at them. "In any decent navy they wouldn't even make room for you in the brig. Go to hell the lot of you, and drown without me!"

"Your Excellency," Samoilow replied cooly, "those times are gone forever. Either you take over the command or we'll shoot you!"

"And what good would that do you?" taunted Pogorelsky. "Whom will you get to show you fools how to do a man's job?"

The sailors looked at one another.

Pogorelsky suddenly saw his submarine in the hand of these ignorant fools. He loved his ship, and in some strange way he loved his men. It pleased him

that they were compelled to come to him like wayward children. But nothing of that emotion showed in his bearing or in his face.

"All right," he sneered, snapping his fingers. "I'll take over the command of the ship. But—on my own conditions—"

Samoilow and the sailors, who had already half turned away, now halted.

"I'm no comrade!" thundered the commander. "And I keep my uniform. Besides that, I'm not altering my character for you. The sight of every one of you makes me sick, and my hands itch. I'm going to punch your dirty noses whenever I feel like it. If I don't, there's no sense to the whole thing. You can sink for all I care!"

The sailors scratched their thick heads in silence. Why shouldn't a fellow get pasted now and then? But in that case, what good was the whole revolution?

Suddenly a crafty smile stole over their leader's features. Standing rigidly at attention in front of Pogorelsky as he did in the old days, Samoilow shouted:

"Your orders, Excellency! During the hours of service you can beat us up as much as the book says. But—" and Samoilow glibly parroted phrases from the proclamation of the new government— "in view of universal liberty and the rights of man, after the hours of service the ship's crew reserves the right to sock your Excellency, the captain, in the jaw as much and as long as it pleases their revolutionary ideas. The crew, too, has its revolutionary character which it has no intention of changing."

Wide grins spread over the sailor's faces. Samoilow would see to it that they got every possible ounce out of a hard bargain.

Pogorelsky looked at Samoilow in amazement, not unmixed with inward amusement.

"What a scoundrelly dog," he thought. "Still, he's a fine fellow! I'll take his offer."

He got up, caressed the imperial decoration that still glittered on his chest, and went with the group to the vessel.

An hour later his hoarse voice could be heard all over the harbor.

"Swine!" he thundered. "The guns are foul with dirt! The diving hatches are rusty! Where's the oil? Stand at attention! Eyes right, eyes left! Where in hell's your eye?"

And once more his fist crashed through the air. Once more sailors spat their loose teeth overboard and wiped the blood off their faces in terror.

Work lasted for twelve long hours. The submarine could scarcely be recognized. Polished metal gleamed in the sun. Not a speck of dirt was to be seen on the deck. The engine room looked as if every inch of it had been gone over by sailor's tongues. The guns shone in the evening sun. Even the sailor's trousers were pressed. The entire ship reminded one of a clean, glittering toy.

At last the whistle blew. Service was at an end. Up to then Samoilow had been dumbly scrubbing the deck. Now he straightened up, strode to Pogorelsky.

"There!" he said, and drove his huge knuckles into his face.

Pogorelsky did not defend himself, but jumped off the deck and ran, pursued by jeers and catcalls from the sailors, through the streets of the port.

Next day the comedy was repeated. The sailors toiled in silence. But the moment work was finished, their eyes glittered evilly.

Then Pogorelsky began feverishly to think up new strategems. He would dress in the uniform of a common seaman at the last minute and escape by the skin of his teeth. Or, some of the few surviving officers would show up at the dock in the nick of time to carry him off.

Every evening after the day's work the crew gathered in the forecastle. Samoilow grumbled at the hard labor and strict discipline, but said hopefully:

"Just wait. Soon they'll sight the

peace; then we'll settle up accounts once and for all."

While these daily battles engaged Pogorelsky and the crew, the icy northern winter was closing in. The Gulf of Finland froze; the submarines were embedded in ice. On all the vessels, with the exception of Pogorelsky's, chaos was lord. They had to hold out through the winter before they could make their way back to St. Petersburg. As they did in the days of the revolution, sailors still sat in the wireless operators' rooms. The telegraph wires buzzed monotonously, uniting the frozen fleet with the distant city of St. Petersburg.

The news that peace had been concluded was awaited eagerly with each passing day. But the city of Brest-Litovsk lies far from Hangoe.

The German fleet appeared outside the harbor of Hangoe on the 27th of March, 1918.

SAMOILOW was the first to catch sight of the distant plume of smoke from the German battle-fleet.

"It's all up with us," he muttered, his face drawn and pale. The news spread rapidly. The sailors rushed together. Pallid faces. Eyes staring in horror. Quavering voices.

"What are we going to do?" they cried. "What's going to happen now?"

"Nothing is going to happen," Samoilow replied angrily. "They'll hang us. That'll be the end of it."

Samoilow's eyes narrowed.

"That's right," he thought. "If the Germans come, they'll hang all the Bolsheviks."

A drunken sailor came forward.

"Comrade," he mumbled, wiping his tear-stained face, "I know well enough what's going to happen. I saw it in a dream. The Germans are going to crucify every Bolshevik."

The crowd was paralyzed. The drunkard's idiotic dream was meeting with frightened credence.

"Be quiet," Samoilow told them. His eyes were icy glints in his head. "Let's at least ask what the Germans want."

His proposal was accepted. A delegation of sailors was soon chosen and steamed off to the German flagship. The Admiral permitted no discussion. He was stern, chary of speech. He sent word:

"Unconditional surrender or leave the harbor at once!"

A panic such as they had never known seized the Russian fleet. It was impossible to escape over the sea of ice in submarines. There were no ice-breakers.

"We're in a bad way," Samoilow cried. "Every man for himself!" His sailor's blouse flapping around him, he rushed into the town. Sailors ran after him.

"I feel German hemp around my neck already," he shouted. He dashed into a shop to see rows upon rows of bottles of wine and vodka staring him in the face.

"Souse yourselves, comrades," he yelled. "We're done for, anyhow!"

The sailors needed no such encouragement. Soon the threatened town was in the throes of a frenzied orgy. Wine barrels were rolled out on the street, stove in. The sailors drank out of them. They drank from glasses, cups, bottles; they even filled their sailors' caps with liquor. It was not long before the bloated, senseless faces of desperate sailors stared up from every muddy gutter in the port.

Here and there resounded cries of despair. Samoilow sat in the middle of the street.

"Whose fault is all this?" he raved. It's the submarines' fault. If they hadn't given us submarines, the Germans would leave us in peace. Smash the submarines!"

Yells of drunken applause rent the air. Like a horde of maniacs, the sailors swept down upon the vessels. One ship after another was demolished in the blind passion for destruction.

Each vessel was filled with explosives.

The fuse was lighted; in a deafening explosion ship after ship disappeared. Columns of smoke filled the heavens in quick succession. The sailors had no conception at all of navigation, but a very good idea of destruction.

Pogorelsky's was the last vessel in the row. Her commander stood solitary upon the bridge. The war, for him was not yet at an end.

"I'm an officer," he reflected. I'm in command of a submarine. The enemy lies before me. The war is lost, but I don't recognize the peace. I'm ready to attack the whole German fleet with my ship. If that's impossible, then it's my duty to save the vessel."

IN HORRIFIED disgust he watched the suicide of the fleet. Cascades of water shot up all around him. One submarine after another sank. In his mind's eye he could see the sneer of the German admiral. The wild crowd of sailors was nearing his ship. Her crew jumped on deck. Pogorelsky leaped down from the bridge.

"Halt!" he yelled in a thunderous voice. "Not one step further!"

"What do you want?" Samoilow answered him, his face smeared and dirty.

"Throw up the sponge. It's all over with us!"

"One moment," said the captain.

Samoilow and his followers involuntarily stood at attention.

"Jailbirds and rats," Pogorelsky spat at them, "you've spun your thread. Whether you explode our submarine or not, the Germans will catch you and string you up anyway. I'm not sorry for you. You all deserve the gallows, every one of you. I'm only sorry for the ship."

He fell silent and looked, half grim, half longing, into the ice-bound distance.

"There's just one chance to save the boat and yourselves—"

"You can save us?" asked Samoilow incredulously.

The sailors hardly dared breathe. Somewhere in the deepest recess of their hearts, they felt a curious respect for their remarkable commander. They hated him, but they knew he achieved things they were unable to comprehend.

"You can save us?" asked Samoilow.

"I don't know," the officer replied. "We can't push through the ice. It's twelve feet thick and more. But—" Pogorelsky eyed them with a compelling look—"why shouldn't we try to make it under the ice? If the worst comes to the worst, we drown. But since you can't escape the swinging gallows anyway, if you remain here, it can't make much difference to you how, where and when you croak."

In terror the sailors looked at him.

"Under the ice," they whispered hoarsely to each other.

They did not know that no submarine had ever ventured underneath the ice. A cold dread took possession of them. You couldn't plunge deep under the ice. You couldn't get any fresh air into your lungs. The slightest injury to the vessel meant certain death.

They looked at Samoilow. His eyes were fixed on the captain. Bright and cold they were. But from the depths came a look of sincere admiration. Two men from the same village, with the same hard, gray eyes, they stood there motionless, facing one another as if under a spell. All at once, Samoilow drew himself up.

"Done!" he cried. "Hanging or drowning, it's all the same to me. And that—" he turned to the others—"goes for all of us."

For the first time in their lives Pogorelsky and Samoilow regarded each other in friendly fashion. Slowly, the captain raised his hand and held it out to the sailors.

"We'll try it," he said softly.

IN THIS way began the most daring adventure of a submarine during the World War—the dash under the ice of the Gulf of Finland to Kronstadt, the ice-free military harbor of St. Petersburg.

The explosion of the other submarines had freed a stretch of water near the shore. Far away on the horizon the German vice-admiral stood on his quarter-deck. He looked through his telescope.

"Still one submarine left," he remarked to the officer at his side. "It'll explode in a minute."

Suddenly, he gave a startled exclamation.

"The submarine is sinking!" he stammered in excitement. "What is the meaning of that? Yes. It is actually submerging. For God's sake, those people want to get to Kronstadt! Under the ice, too!"

He put down his telescope. His eyes shone with a new respect.

"All honor to them," he said to his aides. "They are knaves, but they know the meaning of bravery. I have never heard of a submarine traveling under ice before."

On board the submarine itself a ghostly atmosphere reigned. To save electricity Pogorelsky switched off the lights. A flickering candle illuminated the dark cabins of the vessel. Sobered as if by a miracle, the sailors obediently, carefully executed every order.

Undreamed of dangers menaced the ship. Nobody knew how long the voyage would last. When the needle on the indicator showed a depth of thirty feet, Pogorelsky gave the order for full speed ahead. A few minutes later, and the ship was right under the thick, unbreakable, fatal mass of ice.

Pogorelsky stood at the steering wheel. Resolutely, he steered the vessel through the opaque blackness of the sea.

"Don't think, don't think!" the words kept hammering repeatedly in his head. "We've made up our minds. We can only go forward. No turning back for us now!"

One thought alone dominated his brain: Air! The air in the vessel was precious. It was impossible to supplement it in any way. Pogorelsky called the crew together.

"We can't renew the air," he told them. "You must breathe less."

Sullenly, the sailors regarded Samoilow.

"It isn't his fault," the captain said. "You can breathe all you want in Kronstadt."

The results of the unwonted scarcity did not immediately appear. Some of the sailors were seized with convulsive yawning. No one had the time to pay attention to them. Each man stood at his post and worked with feverish efficiency.

Slowly the vessel crept forward through the depths of the sea. No buoy, no beam of light to point her way. From Hangoe to Kronstadt the voyage for an armored cruiser, traveling at normal speed, takes twelve hours. For a submarine making her way under the ice the time was unpredictable.

Hour after hour crawled by. With torturing slowness the hands crept around the clock. The sailors scarcely moved. If you move you must breathe harder and there was so little air.

The heat in the confined space became more intense.

The sailors looked up at the ceiling.

"The ice will crush us," Samoilow whispered.

Then again silence as of the tomb, broken only now and then by the decisive voice of Pogorelsky.

The first twelve hours had dragged themselves away. The next twelve seemed like twelve days. Twenty-four hours under the ice. Even Pogorelsky did not realize he was breaking all submarine records. He only knew the air in the little ship grew ever closer, ever more suffocating. The sailors' eyes flickered

from Samoilow to Pogorelsky and back again.

As if spontaneously, a terrific thought was borne into the dulled, fear-stricken brains of the sailors. The supply of air was not sufficient for all. Were they all, then, without exception, to choke out their lives in the little, cramped ship? Sweat streaming off them, the sailors lay gasping next to each other on the floor. They regarded each other with sidelong, suspicious glances. Not enough air for all of them. Dead men don't breathe.

"We're too many of us," one of them spoke up slowly.

Everyone stiffened.

"Perhaps someone will die on the way," said another menacingly.

The heavy silence hung like a black pall. Instinctively, hands grasped at revolvers or wide, Finnish daggers. A stab, a shot and there would be more air to breathe.

Samoilow stood leaning against the wall.

"Stop it," he warned, "we won't have anything like that. If it comes to it, we'll decide by lot."

The sailors huddled together. Entrust their lives to the hazardous leap of a small, eight-cornered die? No, better an open battle. A few minutes more, and the submarine would have been the scene of a wild, primitive fight to the death, with every man's hand against his fellow.

All at once, the captain appeared. His voice was hoarse.

"I'll shoot any man who attacks his comrades," he declared. "Either all of us come through—or none!"

The sailors gazed dully in front of them. Each realized it would be foolish to kill his neighbor only to fall the next second with a bullet from the captain's gun in his brains.

Time crept. Pogorelsky ordered the vessel to stop. He looked at the compass. They should be in the vicinity of Kronstadt. There was no sense in taking the risk any longer. The provisions of air were drained to the dregs. Without turning his head, sunk between his shoulders, he whispered the order to rise.

Pogorelsky's body was rigid as he waited, hardly daring to breathe. He could not move his limbs. He did not know whether the compass was in order, he did not know whether they were really off Kronstadt. Perhaps he had miscalculated. Perhaps they were somewhere in the middle of the sea. Everything was possible in this frozen hell!

Seconds passed. The decisive moment was at hand. If the sea was still covered with a thick sheet of ice, the boat would sink and the entire heroic venture would have been made in vain. Pogorelsky looked at the depth-gauge: 15 feet, 12 feet, 10 feet. Suddenly, he shouted aloud and turned around.

He did not need to say another word. The sailors jumped up. They understood. They were saved. A few seconds more; and the conning-tower opened, burst by frantic hands. Fresh air streamed in. The sailors sprang to the deck drawing full, deep breaths into their lungs, shouting hoarsely, joyously. Before them, surrounded by a mirror-calm sea, lay the harbor of Kronstadt. The unique, never-repeated venture of the submarine was at an end.

The submarine put into a wharf. The sailors leaped off the deck. Revolutionary Kronstadt received them with no particular enthusiasm. Last to leave the vessel was Samoilow. At his departure he turned, looked his captain squarely in the eye and said:

"That was a damned good job, your Excellency. I've got to hand it to you. But so was this a good job," and he pointed to his mouth in which the gap left by a knocked out tooth was plain to see.

Touches of gray streaked their hair at the temples as they stood facing one another. The likeness between the two was even more accentuated. They seemed to have aged simultaneously.

Pogorelsky remained alone. No one was waiting for him. And now the war was over for him as well. But this time he received no order at the hands of the Czar. Solitary, he made his way along the quays.

No paper mentioned his great deed. He was neither feted nor acclaimed. The new government had little time to spare for personal courage. But it did find the time to spare to bestow a most unusual reward.

A few days after landing, Pogorelsky was arrested and taken to St. Petersburg. He was charged with having performed heroic deed to court popularity and thereby bring about the downfall of the government. He made no defense. He was only a captain. He had done his duty as he saw it and nothing else concerned him.

The prosecutor demanded his death. The judge agreed. In all Russia no voice was raised to save the hero.

On the day the sentence was executed, Samoilow was stumbling through the streets of Kronstadt. He was again the sole captain on board the submarine. Now, too, he had the time to learn navigation. But the prospect did not please him. Alone, he walked along the streets and entered a saloon.

Soon ranks of bottles of vodka were massed in front of him.

"So they've 'liquidated' you," he mumbled brokenly, "wiped you out. You aren't there any more, your Excellency. Just like my tooth."

Suddenly, he sank his head onto his arms. Small, glistening tears rolled from his little eyes. Sorrow or vodka, which it was he didn't know. His rough sailor's hand dashed the tears away.

Slowly he straightened up and spoke softly into the void to his invisible, vanished enemy:

"You were a real man, your Excellency—" the bottle reflected back his face, the face of Pogorelsky—" a real man and—my brother."

OFFICE UPSTAIRS

By HOWARD R. MARSH

JOE NOVICK'S big boots kicked up a white cloud of alkali dust as he raced up the single main street of Quartz City. He panted past the drug store—the only two-story building in all of Quartz—and skidded into the stairway just beyond. Momentarily he stopped, stared at the neat board sign—

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Then he pounded up the wooden steps.

Eighty seconds later Joe pounded down again with Dr. Jeremy Taylor, coatless, hatless, at his heels. The two raced step for step back along the alkali street, Dr. Taylor's reddish-gray hair glinting in the desert sun, his medicine bag banging occasionally into Joe's bulging hip.

"Accident at the mine!"

The four words leaped from shack to shack and each door debouched a wife or child. Taut faces were turned toward the Gold King adit; women and children ran, silently, fearfully.

At the black maw of the mine adit, which drifted a full three hundred yards into black decomposed granite, a cluster of miners parted respectfully for Doc Taylor. Man to man they knew, admired, almost loved him. He had treated their wives, brought their children into the world, amputated a hand for one, set a broken leg for another, all with the same friendly competence. Things were already better at the Gold King mine, now that Doc Taylor had arrived.

"Premature blast, doc," old Pat Moran explained. "Some bozo tamped the dynamite too hard. Or spark, mebbe. A dozen holes let go. Think it was Gus Peterson. He was on a party last night. Kind of jumpy and—"

"How many in here?" Dr. Taylor had taken three acetylene hat lamps from

near-by miners and was fastening one to each side of his vest.

"Seven, we reckon. Barney Barnes, Sid Ossi— You can't go in yet, doc, it's still droppin'." But Dr. Taylor already was swallowed by the gaping maw. They could see his silhouette, medicine case in one hand, the third tiny lamp in the other; he splashed and faded from sight and only the yellow gleam of light on water showed his advance.

"Come on, Joe Novick!" muttered Pat Moran. "The doc'll need some help. Takes guts, but—"

"To hell with you and your guts, Pat Moran!" muttered Joe Novick. He seized a lamp and plunged into the adit.

At almost exact intervals of fifteen minutes, a limp body was packed out of the mine by brawny Joe Novick and deposited to the care of relatives.

"Doc treats 'em first," Joe panted. "Give 'em first aid or a hypodermic or somethin'. Then he passes 'em up over a rubble dam to Pat and Pat brings 'em part out to me. It's hell in there, guys, hell! Stoops all gone; roofs hangin' by a cobweb, water deep beyond the rubble." Back he plunged for another load.

"Doc told Pat they're all pretty good," Joe panted an hour later. "Just concussion or somethin'. He's takin' his time on each one. All 'cept Gus Peterson. He's the last one in there now and prob'ly no good. Don't know how doc can lift him over the dam. Two hundred twenty pound. Doc must be all in. The air is terrible, the water is up on him and he's drug 'em all fifty yard or more—"

The words of Joe Novick were silenced by a belch from the mine's maw, a rush of air, a rumble, followed instantly by the mud-covered, cursing figure of Pat Moran. Dr. Jeremy Taylor, it seemed, in pushing the huge body of Gus Peterson over the rubble dam, had braced his feet against a weakened pillar. Finally and completely the roof had crashed on the doctor and his last patient.

NO argument where the grave of Dr. Jeremy Taylor should be—the very top of the mountain, where he could watch over the wild, blasphemous and worshipful flock he had tended; argument only as to which miners should hollow from the mountain's granite a cell for his body.

No dispute arose about the services, either, for Druggist Simonds possessed the one prayer book in Quartz. Long hesitation ensued about the music, for certainly "R'aring, T'aring Buckaroo" and "Cowboy's Lament" were inappropriate and some of the words in "Chisholm Trail" and "The Miner's Daughter" would be offensive to even a broad-minded man like Doc Taylor.

Eventually up on the mountain top, while eyes gazed blankly across the undulating, creosote-billowed desert and blinked because the sun was too bright, miners and wives and children sang the first verse of "Swanee River" which Pat Moran had laboriously taught them, then listened to Druggist Simonds read from the little black book and finally sang the second verse.

After the singing came silence on the mountain top. Something was lacking. The job wasn't done. Couldn't leave Doc Taylor like that. Couldn't start shoveling granite on him yet.

Pat Moran and Joe Novick had the same inspiration at the same moment. They hurried down the mountain, away from the waiting mourners. They came back, red-faced, panting, cursing happily. Pat carried a board sign. He had ripped it from the foot of the stairway in Quartz City's only two-story building. Now he and Joe Novick placed it carefully at the head of the grave and everybody looked approvingly straight up at the desert-blue sky:

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OFFICE UPSTAIRS

A Cablegram From Cape Haitien

By KENNETH B. COLLINGS

ROGERS hurried into the Club National at Cape Haitien, and almost collided with the slender, debonair man in military khaki who was just leaving. Rogers side-stepped; the officer side-stepped. They tried valiantly to avoid bumping; they dodged this way, and that. In the end they jostled each other anyway.

"Sorry," said Rogers, briefly.

"Ten thousand pardons, *monsieur*," gushed the officer, effusively. "I humbly apologize; the fault was entirely mine." He bowed low and obsequiously, then passed out of the club.

"Now, what musical comedy did he escape from?" muttered Rogers, to himself. He glanced after the departing figure.

Twin stars on his shoulders marked him as a colonel in the Garde d'Haiti, but he was still young. He was small; his uniform, immaculate and overly form-fitting; his shiny boots were adorned with gold-mounted, silver spurs which tinkled musically as he walked. And the walk itself was mincing and dainty.

Rogers shrugged his shoulders in disgust. He walked on to the table where Beserval, president of the Bank du Nord, and old Valois, the interpreter, awaited him.

"I need to know a dozen things," said Rogers, as he shook hands and sank into a chair. "As you know, gentlemen, I am just off the boat from New York. Before night, my directors will be expecting my report by cable.

"How are things getting along now that the Marines have departed? With the Garde d'Haiti being run by natives, is it safe to do business here? Are its officers competent?"

Rogers hesitated, and then added: "If that overdressed little dude I ran into in the doorway is any sample, I'm disgusted."

"Oh!" said Beserval. Old Valois said nothing.

"Who is he?" asked Rogers.

"His name," said Valois, quietly, "is Colonel Jean Marie Malesherbes Plendome. He is commandant of Cape Haitien and military governor of the Department of North Haiti."

"Hell!" snapped Rogers. "You'll have a revolution inside three weeks."

Valois sighed:

"Plendome is of pure French descent; many people, even generals, do not understand his ways. Let me tell you about him."

IT WAS late one afternoon, while I sat at the end of General Bronson's desk, that Plendome—he was a lieutenant in those days—passed through the outer office on some errand or other with the adjutant. As usual, he was dressed to perfection.

"Hey you! What's your job?" yelled the general. "You with the polished boots," he roared. Plendome did not at first comprehend that he was being addressed.

Briefly, Plendome told him that he was post exchange and recreation officer in Cape Haitien. "The position, General," he said softly, "is not of my choosing. I should prefer something which would give me chance to exercise those arts of soldiering at which I am proficient."

"Holy smoke!" roared Bronson, turning to me. "Did you hear that, Valois?"

Plendome stood there quietly looking at the general.

"What's your name?" rasped Bronson.

"Jean Marie Malesherbes Plendome, Second Lieutenant, Gendarmerie d'Haiti," answered Plendome. It was before they changed the name from "Gendarmerie," to "Garde," you know, but it was the same army.

That name was the last straw to the general's patience.

"Jean!" he snorted. "Marie!" he rumbled. "All right, Plendome, you asked for another job; you've got it! Get the hell out of my sight and don't come back until you bring me Guillaum du Nord. Dead or alive, preferably dead. He and that brother of his are making nuisances out of themselves."

Yes, gentlemen, Guillaum du Nord and Guillaum's brother. Names to conjure with. Two Caco chiefs who were always tough customers. And in those days they were at the height of their power. Almost every marine and gendarme in Haiti had chased them for five years, but they had never seen hide nor hair of them.

Not to mention the fact, which you, Beserval, should remember only too well, that just at that time they had plenty of money and therefore, followers. That is, if they were still in Haiti. They had recently robbed your branch bank at Grand Riviere. They skinned the cashier alive, poor devil, and got away with 200,000 gourdes. While they left no trail, most people surmised that they had escaped to France to spend all that money.

Most of the Caco chiefs were only ignorant black boys who had butchered a few market women with rusty machetes. But Bronson was sending Plendome out into the hills to capture men who, if found at all, would be well armed and have followers. And besides, because he had been stuck on his office job here in the Cape, the lad was out of touch with conditions in the bandit country. I think the general expected a protest, but he didn't get one.

"Very well, sir," said Plendome. He turned on his heel and went out. The general must have known that he had been a bit unreasonable, because a few minutes later he sent an orderly to tell Plendome he could take as many gendarmes as he thought necessary. But he

had disappeared; an hour later the orderly reported that he could not be found in the Cape.

And now, gentlemen, please do not press me for the details of where I obtained my information as to the events of that night. Some I gathered from this source, and some from that. You know that I was an interpreter in the intelligence department, and that department has long ears. But because Jean Plendome has never told anything to anyone, I can tell you nothing of his emotions that night. I shall tell you *what* he did; you will have to judge for yourselves *why* he did it.

When Jean Plendome left the general's office and walked out into the street, there was just about an hour of daylight left. It was the time when the military mail plane, allowing an hour for the flight to Port au Prince, usually left the Cape. Jean found a telephone and called the airport. Having no written orders, he proceeded to violate every regulation in the book.

At the flying field, he caught Lieutenant Johnson—the aviator, you know—just as he was about to take off. Jean Plendome disguised his voice and told Johnson he was the sergeant major at headquarters.

"We have," said Jean, "a military passenger to be dropped off at Hinche. Lieutenant Plendome of the Gendarmerie. He is on his way to the airport now."

How he reached the airport in less than ten minutes, I do not know, but he did. When he arrived at the field, he was, of course, expected. Lieutenant Johnson had no reason to suspect anything; requests to carry military passengers all over Haiti were too numerous to excite comment. Some later comparison of the records of the aviation squadron with those of headquarters might reveal the deception, but that might not be for weeks, if ever.

Hinche, as you know, gentlemen, is about forty-five miles south of here in the interior. It lies in a valley between two mountain ranges, fairly close to the Dominican border. Those mountains have always been a hiding place for Cacos, so perhaps Jean was only proceeding on a hunch. When he climbed from the plane at Hinche, however, his story to Major House, the commanding officer, showed no signs of indecision.

He told the major that he was on a special intelligence mission, and in order not to miss the mail plane, had been sent off with verbal orders; written confirmation would be along in a day or so. That was all right with House; he had no reason to doubt it.

Besides which, Jean now took the major into his confidence, at least in part, and borrowed the ramshackle old touring car which was the only transportation at Hinche. Jean refused the assistance of everyone, and ignored the major's warning that the river was flooding and that he could never cross the ford. From the quartermaster he borrowed a flashlight, two lengths of rope and a five gallon can of gasoline. Loading these aboard the car, he rattled off down the rocky road, alone.

Four miles outside of Hinche, he reached the ford. Sure enough, it was shoulder deep, and rampaging along at a frightful pace. Jean located the Judge de la Paix—always the head man in the interior—of the little village, and from him he borrowed some ragged old clothes on the pretext that he did not want to ruin his clean uniform in the muddy water.

Then he swathed the carburetor of the car in oil soaked rags, and offered fifty natives a gourde apiece to carry the automobile across the river. They refused flatly. "In the morning," they said, "yes, it could be done." But it was now pitch dark, and some of them might be drowned.

Under those circumstances, any one of us would have doubled the offer, and

then tripled it. When they still refused, we would have given up. But that was not Jean's method. To the contrary, he reduced his offer to half a gourde apiece. "But that," he said, "is just so no man will work for nothing. In addition, I shall post a grand prize of 100 gourdes. When I am safely across the river, all those who have helped me, will draw lots for the prize. Some man among you will be rich."

That ended the argument; he had more help than he needed.

You have seen our mountain streams in freshet, when the angry water rushes thirty miles an hour and more, in a twisting, raging torrent. It was like that, and before they could even start to get the car across, they must rig two ropes from bank to bank and tie them to trees. These were to keep the porters from being swept down stream.

Then they slipped two long poles under the belly of the car and started across. In that bedlam of noise, darkness, water and confusion, black boys lost their grips and were swept under the water. But always others, greedy for a chance at the prize which meant wealth beyond their wildest dreams, grasped the handles and carried on.

Jean was in the thick of the mess, shouting orders above the tumult of sound. Slipping, clawing and gasping for breath, they wrestled the car across by main strength and awkwardness, depositing it on the far bank. Jean's immaculate appearance was a thing of the past. As he unwrapped the carburetor, he managed to smear his hands and face with dirty oil so that his disguise was complete. In the darkness, no one could now tell him from any other native hillman.

AND mind you, how cleverly he had done it. You know that out in the hills the drums talk. They send news of any strange events as quickly as any telegraph wire. There was nothing unusual about a gendarme in uniform, but had Jean attempted to pass that way in any disguise, it would have been quickly detected and every tom-tom in the valley would have throbbed the news.

But he had done no such thing. He had arrived at the river in full uniform. He had merely borrowed old clothes to save his good ones, which seemed natural enough, even to primitive minds.

With the Judge, Jean left money enough to cover the pay of the boys and the prize, and told him to hold a drawing. He also instructed him to leave the ropes in place and take good care of his uniform as he would return that way very soon. Then, teeth chattering from his clammy, wet clothes, he bounced off along the terrible bush road. It was really nothing more then a trail, and the single feeble headlight which the old car boasted, showed the trees converging overhead into a matted roof.

In that vast, uneven blackness, it took him two hours—half of it he spent boiling along through the mud in low gear—to cover sixteen miles to the northeast and reach the foot of the mountains which mark the Dominican border. About midnight, he pulled into a clearing around a solitary thatched hut. The place was deserted. Every native within five miles had heard the car and seen its headlight bobbing along in the dark. They were all hiding, on general principles.

Jean spent the better part of ten precious minutes in alternately sounding a low whistle as a signal, and waiting for an answer. Finally, a man and his half-grown son approached silently from the jungle.

For a few minutes Jean whispered to the man, who then sent his son to get horses. The lad returned leading two ragged ponies. Jean instructed him to bring them along and follow the car; to meet him about half a mile *back* along the trail by which he had come. Then

he got into the driver's seat and put the older native beside him. With an exaggerated clashing of gears, he turned the car about and started back towards Hinche.

That, of course, was for the benefit of possible watchers on the mountains. Jean wished them to know that he was now returning whence he came. As yet, he had heard no tell-tale drums talking. As he drove, he explained something over and over again to the native. Then he made him repeat it back to him to make sure he had it straight. About half a mile back along the trail, he halted the car. He did not stop the motor.

His next moves were peculiar. Pointing his flashlight straight ahead down the trail, he switched it on at the same instant he turned the single headlight off. The beam was not quite as bright, but at a distance, it would fool anyone into thinking it was the car's own light. He motioned the native to dismount, and holding the flashlight carefully in a horizontal position, placed it in his hands. He gave him a final warning to keep it always pointed so—to the front.

The man started down the trail towards Hinche at a tireless lope. As Jean watched him disappear around a turn, he was satisfied that the weaving beam of light was deceptive enough. Any watchers on the mountain top would think that there went the automobile. The only weak part of the scheme was that the noise of the running motor would not recede into the distance as did the light.

However, he would take a chance. Few of the hillmen understood anything mechanical, nor had they the least idea how loud a motor should sound. The chances were, that seeing the light fade into the distance, they would trust their eyes rather than their ears, and never question the constant noise of the motor.

By this time the boy had caught up with the horses. Jean left him sitting in the car to guard the extra can of gasoline, and he left the motor to run until the fuel in the tank was exhausted. One of the ponies had a couple of coffee sacks tied to his back in lieu of a saddle, and this one he mounted, leading the other. He retraced his course to the clearing once more, and then clinging to a switch-back trail which would have defied anything but a hill-bred horse, he struck straight up the side of the mountain.

It must have been two o'clock in the morning, when just on the Haitien side of the crest, he dismounted and tethered his horses. The very summit marked the Dominican Frontier, and that, he was not supposed to cross. But regulations didn't mean much to Jean this night; he untied one enormous coffee sack from his horse, and carrying this, he crept the quarter of a mile over the crest to the Dominican side. As he stood in the blackness of that deserted mountain pass, a fresh northeasterly wind blew up the steep slope into his face.

When he felt that breeze, he must have muttered "Thank God," or something like it. Coming, as it did, from his front, it had carried any tell-tale sounds made by his horses, back into Haiti. He listened intently for talking drums, but heard no sound to break the death-like silence.

Now Jean slipped a long, slender, razor-sharp knife from its sheath in his trouser-leg. That was his only weapon, but a knife across the throat makes no noise, and stifles any warning outcry. No listening ears could have heard him now, as he silently crept down the trail into San Domingo. Perhaps a half mile below the crest, he spied that for which he was looking.

In a little gully, off from the trail, was a pin point of flickering firelight. That would be the camp of Guillaum du Nord and Guillaum's brother. In this Domin-

ican fastness, the bandits felt so safe from pursuit that they indulged in the luxury of a camp fire. And this hide-away on foreign soil explained their long list of unavenged raids into Haiti. When things got too hot for the brothers du Nord, they simply fled into San Domingo where gendarmes could not follow.

Beside the fire sat a guard, and across his lap was a modern Springfield rifle —probably stolen from some murdered gendarme. Around the camp lay other sleeping forms; between Jean Marie and the man he sought were at least five or six fully armed men. I often wonder what the little lieutenant thought as he looked into that camp. I wonder if he remembered the ghastly fate of Guillaum's victims of the past.

Did he think of Howard, the aviator forced to land in the mountains? Howard, on whom Guillaum practiced his favorite trick, skinning him alive, a half-inch strip at a time. Or Sergeant Pullen, who once went to hunt the terror of the north. Pullen, whose heart Guillaum ate, and whose brains were used for grease to oil the bandits' bullets that they might be endowed of the white man's ability to hit the mark.

But those are things that I can not tell you. Nor can I know just exactly what happened in that bandit camp. I can, however, pick up the story again when, about four in the morning, Jean rode up to his parked car, its motor now silenced. Across the lead-horse was a bulging sack. If it dripped blood, and from certain bulges and knobs, seemed to contain the body of a man, Jean Marie said nothing.

The black boy took one look at that bundle, and bolted. Pulling and hauling the unwieldy load through the narrow door, Jean loaded his gory sack into the car. He poured his can of gasoline into the empty tank, and started back for Hinche. Just after daylight, he again came to the river, and found it almost as high as on the previous night. Not a native was about; they had all fled.

But Jean had expected that. That boy must have talked, for all the way down the trail, the tom-toms had been thumping. The hill people are superstitious; even the Judge de la Paix was in hiding. Jean wasted no time looking for them; the ropes were still in place, and that was enough.

Clinging to a rope, he fought his way across the turbulent stream. On the far bank, he untied one of the ropes, and then worked his way back on the other. He was gasping for breath — half drowned, in fact—but the third, and worst crossing, was still to be accomplished.

He pulled the free rope to his side of the river, and from it he fashioned a sling for the sack. He swung it onto the remaining rope with a sort of running noose. When shoved from behind, the bag would slide along the line in the manner of a breeches buoy. Then the real struggle began.

Jean eased his cargo into the slashing current; the river snatched it from his grasp and tugged it down stream until the rope was tight as a bowstring. Hanging frantically to the rope, he worked to get control of the bundle. Literally, an inch at a time, he forced that unwieldy sack across the torrent. The raging water banged and cracked it against his body, bruising a hundred places, and once almost breaking his leg. When he finally reached the far side, he walked with a distinct limp. He was four miles from Hinche, with a sack weighing close to two hundred pounds to lug, and no transportation.

NO ONE will ever know the agony of those four miles for slender little Jean Marie; we can only guess. But it was just a quarter past eight when the sentry at Hinche spied a bedraggled figure staggering up the hill

towards camp. It was a hunched caricature of a man, all but hidden under an immense coffee sack. The sentry challenged this strange apparition. He had to call the sergeant of the guard, and then Major House, before Jean could convince anyone who he was.

The thorough soaking in the mud and water of the river had washed most of the blood stains from the sack, besides which, when the major asked what was in it, Jean Marie countered with words which work magic:

"Evidence," he said. "It's for the intelligence department and is a military secret until divulged by headquarters. I have finished my mission and request transportation on this morning's plane to Cape Haitien."

Of course the major said "Yes." Why wouldn't he, it all seemed regular to him. Intelligence officers came and went, and those who arrived at Hinche by plane, frequently departed the same way. "But where in hell," he asked, "is my automobile?"

For the only time on that entire expedition, Jean Marie laughed. "I had to leave it across the river," he said. "You can get it when the flood subsides. You might try to get my uniform from the Judge de la Paix at the same time—if you can find him."

It was just eight fifty when Jean Marie unloaded his cumbersome sack on the field here in the Cape. Johnson was again the pilot, and while he twitted Jean about his bedraggled appearance, like everyone else, he held his questions in check at the mention of the intelligence department. The mail orderly, who waited with a truck to take the pouches to town, agreed to drop Jean and his bundle off at his quarters. That was exactly nine o'clock.

General Bronson arrived at the office at nine-thirty sharp. When he walked in the door, he found Jean Marie sitting on the bench inside. He was again shaved and dressed in his usual flawless fashion, but as he sprang to attention, a gasp from the pain of his injured leg escaped his lips.

"What in the devil are you grunting about?" snapped the General, not noticing for the moment who it was. Then he espied the face of the man he had yesterday banished on a chase that should take him into the hills for weeks, even months, and his rage overflowed.

"You young scoundrel," he thundered. "I gave you a job to do. Why aren't you out doing it? I told you not to come back here until you brought me Guillaum du Nord. You should have been on your way long ago. This is insubordination. What do you mean by ignoring my orders? What have you got to say for yourself?"

Gentlemen, I wish you to see that interview as I saw it that day. To appreciate the situation, you should forget what I have told you about the happenings of that wild night. I knew nothing of that at the time, and neither did the general. All we saw was Lieutenant Jean Marie Malesherbes Plendome, the pampered dandy of Cape Haitien, dawdling about headquarters some fifteen hours after he had been ordered to leave. In a way, you can't blame the general. You would have made the same mistake.

"I have this to say, General." The icy quality of Jean's words should have warned him. His voice was very tired, but the general didn't notice it. "I *have* Guillaum du Nord for you."

"You what?" roared Bronson, pounding his desk.

But, gentlemen, I tell you *my* hair was turning; yes, it was slowly standing on end. Behind Jean, two garçons were lugging a huge sack—a sack, the corner of which left a bloody smear on the floor as they dragged it—through the doorway. From where the general stood I knew he could not see it; there was a screen blocking his view.

"How many men did Guillaum have

with him?" he fired his questions at Jean, to trip him. "And how man gendarmes did you have with you?"

"Counting his brother," said Jean, softly, "he had seven men. There were eight Cacos in the camp including Guillaum; I was alone."

At a gesture from Jean, the porters dragged the sack into the middle of the floor. He leaned over and snapped the draw-string; the garçons grasped the other end and gave it a boost; Jean peeled back the bag, and out on the polished office floor, the crumpled body of Guillaum du Nord, one time terror of the north, flopped at the general's feet. His throat had been cut, and gentlemen, he was not pretty.

The general was a doughty old warrior, but his face was like putty; worse, it was green. He was speechless. And still Jean Marie was not finished.

From the bottom of the sack, he fished the head of Guillaum's brother, and then, the six pairs of ears which had once adorned their six henchmen.

"There you are, General," murmured Jean Marie. "Eight—count them." Without another word, he drew himself up rigidly to attention, saluted, and limped out of the office.

No, gentlemen, I shall not forget it.

Save for the drone of the fan, there was silence about the table in the dining room. "I seem," said Rogers, finally, "to have made a mistake. I think that Colonel Plendome is quite capable of running the Department of the North. Garçon!" he called, clapping his hands for a servant. "Get me a cablegram blank."

Blind Animals Of Mammoth Cave

MAMMOTH CAVE is famous for its blind animals. Blind fish or "blindfish" are taken from one of its subterranean lakes. Their length is sometimes as much as six inches and have remained in the pitch-black pool so many years they have become a distinct species, as who wouldn't. Blind crayfish still play in certain remote rocks, and blind grasshoppers. These are like no other grasshoppers on earth, having no wings—it seems most grasshoppers do have—and long antennae. Even with such antennae, however, it is hard to understand how they know where they are jumping.

There used to be vast numbers of bats. During the War of 1812 a nitrate plant was built in the cave to make ingredients for gunpowder out of the heavy deposits of guano from bats. The cave was supposed to have been discovered in 1809 when a hunter chased a bear into it. Since then two mysterious mummies have been found there, belonging to a race earlier than the Indians.—J. W. Holden.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

THREE writers attend the Camp-Fire this time as new members of our Writers' Brigade, and we give them welcome and hope to publish more of their work. All of them, as you will see, know what they talk about.

Kenneth B. Collings explains his qualifications in these words:

"My rovings began when I was a boy of 16, and included fishing for a living on the Maine coast; surveying in the Montana Rockies, harvesting wheat in Oklahoma, and working as a steward on a banana boat between New Orleans and Central American ports.

"My soldiering started at 18, and I served a year on the Mexican border before joining the Marines in 1917. I learned to fly as a second lieutenant of Marines at Miami, and went to France as a pilot in the First Marine Aviation Force. We arrived too late to see more than a few months of action—but that was plenty.

"After the war, I served in San Domingo and Haiti, where the Cacos were making trouble. It was in Haiti that I picked up the story, 'A Cablegram From Cape Haitien.'

"I don't believe that it is possible for anyone to know Haiti much better than I do, for I have flown over every inch of it many times. Not only that, but I picked out many of the landing fields in the interior. That meant first locating a likely field—some of them no bigger than handkerchiefs—from the air, then landing at some established field, and returning by any transportation available, horseback and afoot, to inspect the new field for possible hidden obstructions. Sometimes this took days of plowing through the jungles, only to find that the field was no good, and I must try again.

"Haiti, to my mind, is fascinating. Its history is amazing. The Spanish chased out the Indians; the French chased out the Spanish, and then imported hundreds of thousands of African slaves. The slaves rose in revolt and killed their white masters, and now we have a cross-section of Africa in our back-dooryard.

"Later, I barnstormed all over the country, flew the Central American and West Indian runs of the Pan American Airways, and ran a flying school. I wandered through China and the Far East on an inspection tour which had as its ultimate goal, the establishment of some flying activities there, but these have not materialized as yet."

In a letter to us about his story, Mr. Collings wrote:

If you want a laugh for yourself, just try to find out how much a human head weighs. I actually called two hospitals, the coroner, the morgue, one doctor, and asked two other doctors and a scientist on the staff of the Museum of Natural History, personally, and none of them had any idea. I finally found out by lying on the floor and laying my head on a scale while Dr. Maclaire balanced the scale. We were afraid that was not accurate, so we checked it by sticking my head into a full bucket of water and then weighing the overflow displaced thereby. A head—mine at least, and it's size 7½—weighs somewhere between 9 pounds 12 ounces and 10 pounds 6 ounces.

Captain William Alford wrote "Life on a Hell Ship" out of personal experience. His sketchy account of himself indicates how wide that experience has been.

"I was born in 1880 in Bristol, England, of very poor parents. At 14 I went to sea as apprentice on the *Charlotte Young*, a three-masted barque, bound from Bristol to Australia. Rounded the Horn three times before I was sixteen. Enlisted in the British Navy in 1896. Terminated my service as signalman in 1900, at Cape Town, S. Africa.

"I have followed the sea 33 years, 17 of which were in sail. I have rounded Cape Horn seven times, and have held a navigator's license 25 years."

And William S Wells, whose late father was an old *Adventure* contributor, whose mother is *Ask Adventure* expert on homesteading, etc., in three Western states, comes to the Camp-Fire because good writing and Camp-Fire seem to run in his family. He says:

Buenas noches, amigos! The editor says to sort of slide in and introduce myself, according to the good old custom among the bunch around the Camp-Fire here, so here goes. Says he, "Tell us something about yourself and about this so-called story of yours, that we are printing against our better judgment."

Well, about myself, maybe the less said the better. Born in the wilds of Wyoming, never mind when, moved at a tender age to the sagebrush country of eastern Oregon. Worked a spell in the pine mills at Bend, Oregon, where a fellow, name of James Stevens, also got his start. Learned drafting just in time to get in on the big smash-up, subsequent history that of a hobo, fruit tramp, and what have you.

How come I to start writing stories? Well, I got the idea mostly from my father, William Wells, who left a vacant seat at this same Camp-Fire when he was called to the "last round-up" last March. I got from him enough of the real dope on the old West, which together with some of my own experiences here and there, sort of gave the idea a boost. Then, too, it's come to the point where a fellow has to make a living one way or another.

Now, about this yarn, "Man From Horse Heaven." The biggest battles in the West weren't between the honest cowmen and the villainous rustlers, as the average magazine of "western" fiction would lead one to believe. The great struggle was between the homesteaders, the "nesters" who flocked onto the free land granted by the government, and the big cow outfits, who claimed that same land as open range, and who figured that possession was nine points of the law, the tenth point being hot lead. Some of these big outfits enforced their rule by the exact methods of modern gangdom. The hired gunman and the technique of "putting a man on the spot" were products of the old West and not of the modern city. Such killers as Tom Horn were the Legs Diamonds, etc., of that day.

In "Man From Horse Heaven" I have tried to show what might happen, and frequently did, when one of these homesteaders with a simple determination to stand up for his rights ran up against some of these gentry. The only recourse in such a case was to beat the killers at their own game, as Lou Haskins did so effectively.

I only trust that none of the boys from "over Horse Heaven way" will think that I am slandering their community.

ALTHOUGH we have not had him in our pages for several years, Arthur D. Howden Smith is a familiar name to the many who read here his rousing, colorful yarns—"Porto Bello Gold," "The Gray Maiden" and others. He explains the character of the *picaroon* in his story in this issue.

The dictionary lumps the three words buccaneer, picaroon and pirate in the same meaning—pirate, sea-robber. But to me there is a very subtle difference among them, representing a gradual evolution of organized spoilation at sea. Buccaneer, of course, comes from the word boucan, which means jerked beef. It was the habit of the original Brethren of the Coast, who established a settlement on the island of Tortuga, to raid Spanish ranches on the mainland for cattle, which they slaughtered and then hung strips of the meat in the sun to dry. The buccaneers were a breed of what at the time would have been called masterless men—forgotten men, if you like—who, for one reason or another suffered from the stringencies of the period: middle of the 17th Century. They differed from pirates in having a very complex social organization. They were the first ocean outlaws of the Caribbean.

The picaroons succeeded the buccaneers. They were, it is true, often pirates, but I maintain that the real connotation of the word implies a disposition to ravage any country but one's own, and any chance allies'. Pirates, on the other hand, were plain gangsters, men whose hands were raised against all other men. They were, however romantic, thieves and gangsters.

Anybody can have a fine time arguing about this. Frankly, I can't prove my theory arbitrarily or academically. It just happens to be my reading of the social conditions generally implied in a period covering two and a quarter centuries, or a trifle less. Hard to be sure about dates here.

W. C. TUTTLE opened up a large subject when he discussed nicknames in Camp-Fire some months ago. Here comes a new list, from the circus this time, and William E. Arensen, of New York City, sends it in.

A list of "nicknames" living and dead, all members or ex-members of the Ringling Brothers Shows. I am sure they will get a kick out of these, especially the boys in Winter quarters where *Adventure* is a favorite.

Sailor, Windy Buck Brown, Bail Ring Harry Brown, One Arm Foley, Finger Smithy, Santa Claus, Beans, Willie Wog, Camel Slim, Laughing Swede, Arkie, Poodles, Long John, Empress.

Hobo King Bozo, Flint, Cockey Kate (dead), Patty the Pig, Gunsel, Poggy Pete, Dummy, Broome Street Swede, Boston Wop, Mule Wop, Pee Wee, Pony Chink Anderson,

Sore Feet Sam Kellogg, Quarter Pole, Ham, Headache Slim.

Happy Jack, Raw Meat Irish, Center Pole, Milwaukee Barnacle Bill, Iodine, Straw Hat, Geed Up, Silent Slim, Dooley County, Frenchy Props, Deafy Bulls, Gug Head Leo, Ta Ta Leo, Hi Pockets.

Pete the Rattler (dead), Eddie Cheese (dead), Sorrel Top (dead), Spot Dutton (dead), Yum Yum, Cigar Charlie, Kanuck, Dan Patch (29), "Shake 'em up" Jimmy, Ear and a half, Hinney Kibbibble, Luke Davis, Cowboy Jimmie Dennelly, Copenhagen Snuss, The Whale, Zeek.

GOOD letters about bee-hunting have been received from Ed. T. Brown, of Toledo, Ohio, and Henry A. J. Castor, of Albany, New York. Much of their information was published in the last Camp-Fire, but Mr. Castor gives new hints to any readers who want to go steeplechasing after bees.

The best time to beehunt is just after a frost, as then the flowers are pretty well killed and the bees will work on your lure. One of the first things you will observe is that bees do not fly in a "beeline" or straight to their hive if there are natural obstacles in the way. However, a general direction can be observed.

You prepare a lure. This can be a basket with several pieces of old empty honey comb, bits of wild comb, empty, or bits of crust with syrup or bits of sugar. A little anise is a great help. Fill the empty comb with syrup or sugar and water.

To get the bees to come to you, you go upwind from the woodland or slashing you are going to work, and burn some sugar and anise in a tin pan. Not much, but enough to make a nice thin smudge drift down wind into the woods. Shortly you will see bees coming up wind looking for you. Only a few at first, perhaps, but the essence of bee hunting is patience. Sit tight and let the first few look you over, load up and go. Soon they will be back with a group, and with luck you may have several hundred bees around. Then you get busy lining them out. Fix your eyes on one bee and when she is loaded, watch her mount, swing back and forth and then shoot off toward the hive. After you have one or two lines well established, you pick up the basket and move a mile or so, to get a cross line.

You can soon get a good idea of the hive location. There is no use in looking for bees in every tree, of course, so you will look over the available trees and pick out such as you think may have hollows. If you find a likely tree, you look at the foot. You may find a little pile of dead insects, old wings and the typical debris of a hive. Also one walks around a likely tree, with head close to the bark and looks up. If there are bees in the tree, one may see a few loafers hanging around or if not, one may see arriving bees. They will be just a dark flash, but it is unmistakable.

All bee-hunting must be done on a nice warmish day that bees will work. Don't be afraid to pick up a basket with several hundred working bees swarming around it. They won't hurt you if you are not rough and don't move quickly. If they get on you and walk up and down your arm, just be calm. They intend no harm and won't sting unless you pinch them. If stung that way, just be calm and don't swing your arms.

If after you have a line working out of your basket, and you cannot figure out just which draw they may be going up, leave the basket standing and go up the valley a way, lie down on your back and stare steadily upward. If bees are using the valley you will soon see little darts of color go by over your head.

Many the lazy hour I have spent on my back proving a line for my father. Remember, a bee flies low but very fast.

I remember one line that was proved to have gone along the foot of some small hills to a woodland, turned at right angles into the wood and followed a woodroad that had a turn, to the point near the tree where they turned at right angles into the wood and so to the tree. We proved this line by sight in the open and partly by sight and partly by ear in the woods.

As to hiving, bees do not always hive in standing trees. I remember our folk hunting a swarm nearly a week in the Cross Lake swamp. They finally located it in a down tree upon which they had sat down to rest.

Don't let anyone fool you. There is more fun in hunting a bee than in eating the honey.

SUNSTROKE and the kind of hat you wear have nothing to do with each other, says S. W. Calkins, of San Pedro, California.

I have just read Gordon MacCreagh's remarks about sunstroke and the solar topee.

I put in a couple of years in Las Vegas and Boulder City, Nevada, during the first stages of construction of Boulder Dam. As a newspaper reporter, it was an almost daily duty to write about victims of the heat.

The altitude there is under two thousand feet. Temperatures of a hundred degrees and upward are the summer rule. Many of the workers were then domiciled in a camp perched on the walls of Black Canyon, where now the dam is nearing completion.

They were the boys who suffered most. Down in the deep canyon, between the sheer rock walls that stored and reflected the heat, they lived and worked for weeks on end. Many of them were overcome. At that time the nearest hospital was in Las Vegas.

So expert did the hospital physicians become in treating of heat prostrations that very few fatalities resulted. Yet I have seen men in convulsions with special clinical thermometers registering body temperatures of as high as 112°. The treatment consisted of placing the victim on a rubber sheeted bed and sprinkling with ice-water. A method of intra-venous saline solution injections was also developed, and proved exceptionally successful.

What I am driving at, however, is the headgear worn by the men working down there at that time. It ranged from the pith helmet to nothing at all, including cloth miner's caps, straws and felts—everything. And no type of headgear seemed to prevent being overcome, according to my own observations.

I am inclined to agree with Mr. MacCreagh that there is a lot of hooey about "sunstroke." It has been pretty well established that it *is* heat stroke, or prostration. Witness the fact that a lot of the victims were in tunnels, under-cuts, and other places where the sun never reached, but where the heat was intense.

Dr. F. M. Ferguson, one of the physicians who treated so many of these heat cases at Las Vegas, made quite a study of the problem.

Doc says that there is gland in the human body that regulates its temperature—to compensate for sudden changes, etc. That gland, if I remember correctly, is what makes it possible for you to "get used to" hot or cold water or weather, etc.

I remember little of the story about that gland, but from what I gathered, it can stand just so much heat and then goes blah!

One fatality I remember. He snapped out of it under the ice-water treatment, but insisted on leaving the hospital without resting a couple of days under warm covering at night. He caught cold and was so weakened he died of pneumonia!

Dr. Ferguson, I know, has made a deep study into the heat prostration problem. I believe he can be reached by writing him at 106 Downs Ave., Stamford, Conn. The subject is by way of being a hobby of his. [Writing to him.—Ed.]

A WHILE ago, a reader wanted to know what kind of pet he could make of an ocelot. H. W. Conklin, of Fort Hancock, New Jersey, tells us about that, particularly about the claws that never get tame.

I have just returned from a three year tour of foreign service in Panama. While there at Fort Amador, I saw quite a few ocelots about the post that were pets of the different batteries. A soldier will make a pet of anything, you know. These cats were tame and could be petted and stroked like a house cat and seemed to enjoy it. They would play, also, but in their manner of playing they differed widely from the domesticated cat.

A tabby cat will make a pass at you in play with his claws sheathed, but not the ocelot. He will play much like a cat and take a swipe at you, but believe me, you had better not let him connect with that pass, because all his claws are way out and he is not at all gentle. Any time he makes a pass he means it, and can give a very painful wound.

In size he may become as large as a fair-sized dog, but those pets that I saw were evidently about half grown for they were about the size of a large cat. But the paws were a great many times the size of those of a tabby cat. They certainly are wicked looking, and what a wicked swipe the cat can make with them!

WHAT a "dew pond" is, and how it is made, is told by A. M. Orr, of Greenville, Pennsylvania.

Referring to request of Mr. George J. Little for information as to "dew ponds."

To make a "dew pond," excavate a hole perhaps three feet deep and thirty feet in diameter, fill the hole nearly to the surface of the ground with loose hay, then cover the loose hay with a layer of empervious material, such as well worked clay.

Given the combination of clear sky, and moisture-laden air of high humidity, and there will be the deposition of water just as there is on a blade of grass, and there will be sufficient water collected to provide quite a supply.

So far as my recollection goes, these "dew ponds" were of ancient use in the North of the British Isles where the elevations were not sufficient to cause precipitation under normal conditions, and were not in use in southern England.

MENTION was made above of W. C. Tuttle and nicknames. A novelette by Mr. Tuttle has just arrived, concerning a couple of Western gentlemen named Mr. Hartley and Mr. Stevens. In case you don't recognize them by these titles, their nicknames are Hashknife and Sleepy.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Be you roving adventurer or stay-at-home, our experts have the answers to your questions.

A CICADA: A large homopterous insect that produces a loud shrill sound. (cf. any dictionary.)

Reqnest:—Could you please answer the following questions in regard to the seventeen year cicada? 1 How does the cicada keep track of the passing time during the long sleep it enjoys? 2 Is the six or eight weeks that it spends above the ground compensation for the seventeen year period of darkness and stagnation?

It may be that these cannot be given a definite answer, but I would like to have your opinion.

—F. HERBERT STEVENSON, Eureka, Ill.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—Insects, including the cicada, do not keep time in the sense that man is conscious of the passing hours. They have no leisure hours or five day weeks, although they do cease feeding to rest and hibernate during winter. To them time is no concern except to grow, develop and mature in order to reproduce their own kind. No living creature, however, is entirely without the ability to mark time in some simple way. The caterpillar ceases its feeding in the fall, spins a cocoon and there passes the winter. At the proper time, it emerges as a moth. Correct temperature and moisture conditions play a part in determining when it emerges. The moth is not conscious of this, nature or instinct solves the problem.

The cicada does not sleep during the long sojourn below the ground which may be 17, 15, 13 or 2 years according to the breed or species involved. It is questionable whether it enjoys this period for it has no consciousness of such things. During this period the young cicada feeds upon the roots of trees and plants. It stops feeding during winter when it is too cold for activity. Instinct plays the greatest part in determining when it is time for the cicada to emerge from its subterrean quarters. Why one brood should remain in the ground for seventeen years, another for fifteen years, etc., is not exactly known. A period of years, of course, is necessary for their development. The seventeen year brood was originally of northern distribution, the fifteen year brood of southern distribution. The thirteen year brood probably resulted from the crossing of the two.

The most remarkable example of long subterrean habits is found in the May fly. Two years are spent beneath the water at the bottom of a pond. Certain species live for less than twenty-four hours after they emerge from the water. During this short time they mate, lay eggs and die.

The short period "enjoyed" by some insects may be considered as compensation for the long periods of subterrean existence. When an insect emerges, it is usually full grown, sexually mature, and ready to produce its kind. This is its sole purpose for existence, for its days, weeks or years of development, and it is in a sense a realization of its whole life period.

In talking of insects, we must realize that they are not human and that it is difficult to speak of their joys, consciousness, etc. Their reaction to light, heat or other stimuli may be entirely different from man's.

LINE your sights down a dale or up a hummock, it still depends on how you look at it!

Request:—What allowances do you make in shooting a rifle uphill and down? My rifle work has been mostly in flat or rolling country; and while I am a little better than fair in shooting over arroyas or nullahs, I have not had much experience in the stated problem.

—T. J. JOHNSTONE, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—I have given quite a bit of thought to this question of firing at different angles, and even a bit of experiment; I'm quite prone to take the result of what I myself see and experience, rather than depend upon what some other man reports.

From what I've personally noted, both from the shooting of myself and other riflemen, I

am of the firm opinion that firing at an angle, either upward or downward, influences the point of impact of a bullet very little; I believe the reduced area of the target due to the angle responsible for more misses than anything else. This after trying shots at different angles with my .30 Springfield Sporter and other rifles of lesser power.

Another thing is that, in firing at something a bit higher than the position of the rifleman, the range oftentimes is very deceiving; I'd experienced this years since, and a good marksman, firing with a rest, set his sights for two hundred yards, missed the small rock in the far side of the canyon, and after raising his sights to four hundred yards, put them on the mark. And he was a man raised in the Inter-Mountain country, too, and familiar with atmospheric and various other conditions.

No, did I expect to fire at any angle, I'd still not raise nor lower my sights for a mark in any way differently than I would for the same mark on a horizontal range.

THE South American chinchilla, domesticated and commercialized for pets and coats.

Request:—I am writing you to inquire about an animal called a chinchilla in South America.

Would foreigners be allowed to hunt, trap or export furs?

I think my friend is interested in getting live specimens.

—W. O. GREENLEAF, San Jose, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Edgar Young:—The chinchilla is a first cousin to the vizcacha, the South American breed of prairie dogs, and second cousin to our own prairie dogs. He has evolved along specific lines which has fitted him for cliff-dwelling and cliff-climbing. He has a long middle toe-nail by means of which he can climb vertical and jutting faces of rock. He is between the size of a gopher and a digger squirrel, has large limpid eyes and jutting round ears. The price of a lady's coat made from these skins runs from $8,000 to $40,000. The hair is tight and curly and the skin tough and lasting and the coats are worth the price, provided a fellow has half a million in each hip pocket to invest.

Strictly speaking, the chinchilla is a resident of the cliffs of eastern Bolivia, but his habitat strays over into Peru on the north and into Chile a short ways to the south.

He is endowed with the native curiosity which is inherent in our own prairie dogs. He will scamper into his hole in the cliff—but he always returns to see what is doing and the Indian figures accordingly and grabs him. As there was always a ready market for the pelt, the entire race of chinchillas was in danger of being exterminated until Bolivia passed a law forbidding their capture, killing, or the export of live animals or skins from the country. Yet, there is quite a bootleg industry in the business at the present time. Eastern Bolivia is a vast country with little, if any, way of enforcing the law.

There are a couple of places in this country where they are being raised in captivity. If I remember correctly one of these men was located in Colorado and the other in Oregon. Neither had reached a stage of the game where they could afford to kill their stock but they had raised from a single pair or a couple of pairs what looked to be around a score. They are quite docile and make good pets.

If you wanted to get any number of them it might be a good plan to get in touch with some ship making the West Coast ports and have some employe arrange with some such outfit as Grace and Co., Gibbs and Co., or Wessel Duval and Co. who have stores in the larger ports and have branches back in the interior whose managers could obtain them from Indians and send them down to deliver to the ship on its next voyage.

I doubt if you could personally make a go of it, hunting, trapping, and exporting them. The Indians know how it is done and it would be a much better plan to hire it done or buy the pelts from Indians who make a practice of catching them. I do not believe Chile or Peru has a law which makes them contraband and you could operate from either one of these countries.

I have little doubt but what certain parts of California would prove ideal for raising these animals.

MOTORCYCLING in Old Mexico.

Request:—In the later part of 1935 I am to return to California and join some friends, who are planning to take a cruise to the southern waters off the coast of Mexico. If time is plentiful, the intentions are to be carried further by continuing on through the Canal and up the coast to the waters of the Yucatan Peninsula, therefore it is not necessary for me to extend my trip to the said peninsula.

In the middle of May, I am leaving for California by way of a motorcycle. After stopping for the races in Indianapolis, I am proceeding on down to Kentucky, then after a brief sojourn will hit the trail for El Paso, or Del Rio. I am in doubt as to which. No matter which is selected I shall probably make the city of Chihuahua the main point for the trip. From there I will attempt to make Durango the next stop and from thence on down to Mexico City. As far south as Tehuantepec on the Gulf I intend to go.

From there up the coast I have not planned. If possible I would like to stop at

some convenient coastal town and purchase my way to the Tre Marias Islands, and back.

Probably from there I will hug the coast along the Gulf to Tia Juana and into the United States.

Now, I would appreciate greatly if you would outline which way you would go if you wished to see the "real" Mexico. I have been to Mexico, the border cities from coast to Gulf, and have had a taste, but the taste left the tang of "commercialized tours." Naturally I expect to spend money, but I don't want to spend it in a tourist spot. In brief I want to go to as many of the out of way spots and still remain on a motorcycle. I want to stop beside the road for the night and prepare a supper without seeing an advertising sign.

You must overlook my crudeness but I am trying to give you a clear idea of just what I seek. I have sought for years, four to be exact, a place that appeals. In my recent trip, Yuma and Douglas in Arizona and El Paso and Del Rio in Texas gave me a taste. Agua Prieta and Ciudad Juarez settled my mind. Mexico must be the place. Tia Juana and Ciudad Juarez were a little too much commercialized, but the atmosphere of Mexico was there, and the craving to see more is strong.

What way would you take? If there is any spot to which I could not possibly go by motorcycle, due to lack of gasoline or impossibility of roads, that you might think would be the one place I might satisfy my craving, I wish you would mention that as well. I can always leave the cycle behind and make a return for it.

Now, what is the El Mercado de Volado. I am given to understand it is the "Thieves Market" located on the south west corner of Palacio Nacionale. I have a vague idea that it is a place run, by, what is crudely termed up here, "fences," those who deal in stolen goods. But how is that possible, and at the same time remain a public sales place?

While in the border towns of Mexico I found great delight in the Mexican cigarette, called "Mexicanos." I bought a carton of them in Ciudad Juarez, after a pack had won me in the town of Tia Juana. I wish now that I had bought more. Is there any place to which I could send an order for five or so cartons?

How much would you consider the cost of fuel in Mexico? I have sufficient for a journey but I am unwilling to carry any great amount, and having it telegraphed ahead at various points is not favorable because I often have the tendency to roam from the planned course and end up in another part of the country.

Will I have a great deal of difficulty in conversing? My Spanish is poor and needs plenty of brushing up.

R. Kenneth Wetzel, Maplewood, N. J.

Reply by Mr. J. N. Page:—You have an ambitious trip outlined for next year and I should like nothing better than to go along with you. But it's out of the question, so I'll help as much as I can.

In the first place you are planning on starting in May, which is at or just prior to the beginning of the rainy season, and therefore the worst possible time to set out on such a journey. October would be much better, if you can possibly arrange it.

The route outlined offers no difficulties on its outward half, namely, to Tehuantepec, but plenty of them on your return. Your gasoline supply, alone, will present a major problem. Also there will be stretches of mountain trail, jungle, etc., where you will have to hire ox-cart transportation for your motorcycle. You may even have to dismantle it and pack it by burro!

I think you can make it all right from Tehuantepec to the Guerrero pleasure resort of Acapulco. About midway on that stretch you will find Tututepec, which was the capital of an independent Mixtec kingdom when Columbus was teething. Tututepec is just a few miles from the coast, directly north of Checahua Bay, or Lagoon. You should stop there for a day or two at least, because of the historical interest of the hilltop town and for the unexcelled fishing in the lagoon. For Tututepec and other Mixtec history read Father Gay's Historia de Oaxaca (rather rare), or talk with some local historian in the city of Tehuantepec.

Acapulco is a pleasure resort, beautiful beach, and all that sort of thing. From there northward your real troubles will begin, for the Pacific Coast from Guerrero to Nayarit is a wild region. Certainly there is no automobile road paralleling the coast, and I don't know just what you will find in the way of connected ox-cart or burro trails. The chances are that you can rough it through, but I'll not guarantee it. You can get definite information in Acapulco, though, and if necessary you can go from there to Mexico City along a modern highway, and strike from Mexico City westward again to Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco. From Guadalajara there is a rough but passable trail (I won't call it a road) to Tepic, the capital of Nayarit, and thence northward to Sinaloa and serviceable highways.

The return half of your journey, as I have said, offers difficulties in abundance, but it is intensely interesting and one that I should like to undertake myself. Perhaps some time I shall do so. You will see, not merely the "real Mexico," but a majority of the many different and sometimes antagonistic tribes which go to make up more than half of Mexico's sixteen-million population. And these tribesmen, as I think you will agree after coming in contact with them, care nothing whatever about Mexico. They care only for the maintenance of their own tribal customs, with a minimum of inter-

ference from the Mexican Government.

I realize that you cannot carry a great deal of equipment on your motorcycle, but you should take along a good but small camera. You will be sure to get some odd shots, and you might remember me with one or two. Field glasses will also come in handy for you, and frequently.

The Volador, or "Thieves' Market," of Mexico City, is now under police supervision and has lost much of its picturesque aspect. It's no longer worth while as an attraction.

You might get that particular brand of cigarettes you inquire about by communicating with the American Consulate in Ciudad Juarez. He will find out prices and the name of some firm for you.

As to funds: Why not deposit a thousand dollars, say, in one of the American branch banks in Mexico City, subject to call by wire? You won't need that much for your entire trip, but I'm making my estimate big enough to give you a margin of safety.

Well, that's all I think of at the moment. If you need anything more, just holler. You're a real adventurer, and that's the kind we're out to help.

LATEST news on homesteading.

Request:—Is there any land open for homesteading in the western part of this country? What is necessary to get some land?

—Louis Bair, Hollywood, Fla.

Reply by Mrs. E. P. Wells:—Because of an order issued by President Roosevelt, there can be no more homesteading on the public lands anywhere in the West for a period of six months anyway, and it is doubtful if there will ever again be homesteading as we have known it in the past. Heretofore, people have been allowed to take up anywhere from 160 to 640 acres of vacant government land, and take their chance of being able to make a living on it; but the good land has been gone for many years and hundreds of settlers throughout the West have been starved out trying to make a go of it.

Most of the public land left will never be good for anything but grazing for stock, but a survey will be made and all land really fit for farming will be used and the government promises help for people to get established when it is classified. In the meantime there is nothing to do but wait for the new policy to be announced.

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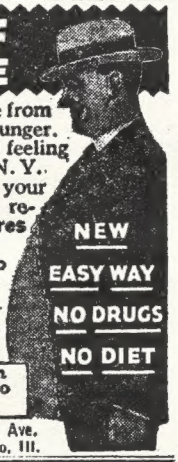

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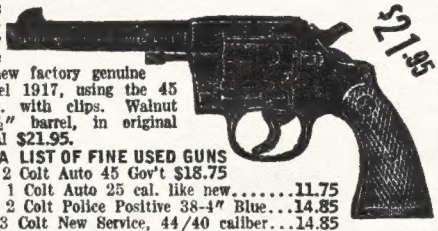

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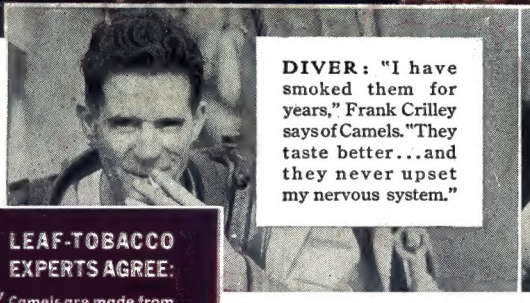

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